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THE WORKS

OF

JOHN HOWE, M.A.

THE WORKS

OF

JOHN HOWE, M.A.

SOMETIME FELLOW OF MAGDALEN COLLEGE, OXON.

VOLUME IV.

CONTAINING THE DISCOURSES

ON SELF-DEDICATION, AND ON "YIELDING OURSELVES UNTO GOD."

ON THOUGHTFULNESS FOR THE MORROW; AND THE DESIRE OF FOREKNOWING THINGS TO COME.

ON CHARITY IN REFERENCE TO OTHER MEN'S SINS.

ON PRAYER FROM THE NAME OF GOD.

ON UNION AMONG PROTESTANTS; AND THE CARNALITY OF RELIGIOUS CONTENTION.

ON MAN'S ENMITY AGAINST GOD, AND RECONCILIATION BETWEEN GOD AND MAN.

ON THE LOVE OF GOD.

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SELF-DEDICATION:

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TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

JOHN, EARL OF KILDARE, BARON OF OPHALIA,

FIRST OF HIS ORDER IN THE KINGDOM OF IRELAND.

My Lord,

I little thought, when in so private a way I lately offered much of the following discourse to your lordship's ear, I should receive the command—which I am not now, so far as it proves to me a possible one, to disobey or further to dispute—of exposing it thus to the view of the world, or so much as to present it to your lordship's own eye. It was indeed impossible to me to give an exact account of what was then discoursed, from a memory that was so treacherous as to let slip many things that were prepared and intended to have been said that day; and that could much less, being assisted but by very imperfect memorials, recollect everything that was said several days after.

Yet I account, upon the whole, it is much more varied by enlargement than by diminution; whereby I hope it will be nothing less capable of serving the end of this enjoined publication of it. And I cannot doubt but the injunction proceeded from the same pious gratitude to the God of your life, which hath prompted, for several years past, to the observation of that domestic annual solemnity in memory of your great preservation from so near a death;[1] that the remembrance of so great a mercy might be the more deeply impressed with yourself, and improved also—so far as this means could signify for that purpose—to the instruction of many others.

Your lordship was pleased to allow an hour to the hearing of that discourse. What was proposed to you in it, is to be the business of your life; and what is to be done continually, is *once* to be *thoroughly* done. The impression ought to be very inward and strong, which must be so lasting as to govern a man's life. And were it as fully done as mortality can admit, it needs be more solemnly renewed at set times for that purpose. And indeed that such a day should not pass you without a fall, nor that fall be

[1] By a fall from a horse, Dec. 5, 1674.

without a hurt, and that hurt proceed unto a wound, and that wound not to be mortal, but even next to it, looks like an artifice and contrivance of Providence, to show you how near it could go without cutting through that slender thread of life; that it might endear to you its accurate superintendency over your life, that there might here be a remarkable juncture in that thread, and that whensoever such a day should revolve in the circle of your year, it might come again and again with a note upon it under your eye, and appear ever to you as another birth-day, or as an earlier day of resurrection.

Whereupon, my honoured lord, the further design of that Providence is to be thoroughly studied and pondered deeply. For it shows itself to be at once both merciful and wise: and as upon the one account it belonged to it to design kindly to you; so, upon the other, to form its design aptly, and so as that its means and method might fitly both serve and signify its end. If therefore your lordship shall be induced to reckon the counsel acceptable which hath been given you upon this occasion, and to think the offering yourself to God "a living sacrifice," under the endearing obligation of so great a mercy, is indeed "a reasonable service;" your life by that dedication acquires a sacredness, becomes a holy, divine life; and so by one and the same means is not only renewed and prolonged in the same kind of natural life, but is also heightened and improved to a nobler and far more excellent kind. And thus, out of that umbrage only and shadow of death, which sat upon one day of your time, springs a double birth and resurrection to you; whereby, as our apostle speaks in another place of this epistle, you come to "yield yourself to God, as one alive from the dead."

So your new year, which shortly after begins, will always be to you a fresh setting forth in that new and holy course of life which shall at length (and God grant it to be after the revolution of many fruitful years, wherein you may continue a public blessing in this wretched world) end, and be perfected in a state of life not measured by time, wherein you are to be ever with the Lord: which will answer the design of that merciful providence towards you; and of this performance (how mean soever) of

Your honour's most obedient,
Humble Servant,
JOHN HOWE.

SELF-DEDICATION.

ROMANS xii. 1.

"I BESEECH YOU THEREFORE, BRETHREN, BY THE MERCIES OF GOD, THAT YE PRESENT YOUR BODIES A LIVING SACRIFICE, HOLY, ACCEPTABLE UNTO GOD, WHICH IS YOUR REASONABLE SERVICE."

Two things are more especially considerable in these words: The matter of the exhortation, that we would "present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, our reasonable service;" and the pathetic form of obtestation that is used to enforce it, "I beseech you by the mercies of God." The former I intend for the principal subject of the following discourse, and shall only make use of the other for the purpose unto which the holy apostle doth here apply it. Our business therefore must be, to show the import of this exhortation. In the doing whereof we shall,—1. Explain the *terms* wherein the text delivers it; 2. Declare more distinctly *the nature of the thing* expressed by them.

I. For the terms: By "bodies," we are to understand our whole selves, expressed here synecdochically, by the name of bodies, for distinction's sake. It having been wonted heretofore to offer in sacrifice the bodies of beasts, the apostle lets them know they are now to offer up their own; meaning yet their whole man, as some of the following words do intimate, and agreeably to the plain meaning of the exhortation, "Glorify God in your bodies and spirits, which are his."[1]

[1] 1 Cor. vi. 20.

"Sacrifice" is not to be understood in this place in a more restrained sense than as it may signify whatsoever is, by God's own appointment, dedicated to himself.

According to the stricter notion of a sacrifice, its more noted general distinction (though the Jewish be very variously distributed[1]) is into *propitiatory*, and gratulatory, or *eucharistical*. Christianity, in that strict sense, admits but one, and that of the former sort. By which one,—that of Himself,—our Lord hath "perfected for ever them that are sanctified." We ourselves, or any service of ours, are only capable of being sacrifices by way of analogy, and that chiefly to the other sort. And so all sincere Christians are "as lively stones, built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ,"[2] being both temple, priests, and sacrifices, all at once; as our Lord himself, in his peculiar sacrificing, also was.

In the addition of "living," the design is carried on of speaking both by way of allusion and opposition to the ritual sacrificing. By way of allusion: For a "morticinum," anything "dead of itself," the Israelites were not to eat themselves,[3] because they were a holy people, (though they might give it to a stranger;) much more had it been detestable, as a sacrifice to God. The beast must be brought alive to the altar. Whereas then we are also to offer our bodies a living sacrifice, so far there must be an agreement. Yet also, a difference seems not obscurely suggested. The victim brought alive to be sacrificed, was yet to be slain in sacrificing: but here, "living" may also signify "continuing to live;"—'You,' (as much as to say) 'may be sacrifices, and yet live on.' According to the strict notion we find given of a sacrifice, it is somewhat to be in the prescribed way destroyed, and that must perish, in token of their entire devotedness to God who offer it. When we offer ourselves,[4] life will not be touched by it, or at all impaired, but improved and ennobled highly, by having a sacredness added to it. 'Your bodies are to be

[1] See Sigonius, *De Repub. Hcb.;* Dr. Outram, *De Sacr.* [2] 1 Pet. ii. 5.
[3] Deut. xiv. 21. [4] Cloppenburg. Schol. Sacrific. and others.

offered a sacrifice, but an unbloody one, such as you have no cause to be startled at; it carries no dread with it, life will be still whole in you;'—which shows by the way, it is not an inanimate body, without the soul. But the bodily life is but alluded to and supposed; it is a higher and more excellent one that is meant,—the spiritual, divine life, as, "Yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead."[1] And verse 11 shows what that being alive means: "Reckon yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ;"—alive by a life which means God, which aims at him, terminates in him, and is derived to you through Christ: as he also speaks, "I am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."[2]

"Holy," though it be included in the word "sacrifice," is not in the Greek *θυσία*, and was therefore added without verbal tautology. And there were, however, no real one; for there is a holiness that stands in an entire *rectitude of heart and life*, by which we are conformed in both to the nature and will of God, besides the *relative* one which redounds upon any person or thing by due dedication to him: and which former is prerequired in the present sacrifice, that it may be,—as it follows,—"Acceptable to God;" not as though *thereby* it became acceptable, but as that without which it is not so. Yet also holiness, in the nature of the thing, cannot but be grateful to God, or well-pleasing, (as the word here used signifies,—*εὐάρεστον*,) but not so as to reconcile a person to him who was before a sinner, and hath still sin in him. But supposing the state of such a person first made and continued good, that resemblance of Himself cannot but be pleasing in the eyes of God; but fundamentally and statedly in and for Christ.[3] This therefore signifies both how ready God is to be well pleased with such a sacrifice,

[1] Rom. vi. 13. [2] Gal. ii. 19, 20. [3] As 1 Pet. ii. 5, before quoted.

and also signifies the quality of the sacrifice itself, that it is apt to please.

"Reasonable service;" or "worship," as the word signifies. This also is spoken accommodately to the notion given before of offering ourselves, in opposition to the former victims wherein beasts were the matter of the sacrifice. Those were brute sacrifices. 'You' (as much as to say) 'are to offer reasonable ones.' And it signifies our minds and understandings,—the seat of reason, with our wills and affections that are to be governed by it,—must all be ingredient as the matter of that sacrifice; implying also the right God hath in us, whence nothing can be more reasonable than to offer ourselves to him.

"Present;" that is, Dedicate, devote yourselves, set yourselves before God, as they did "sistere ad altarem," "present at the altar," the destined sacrifices, make them stand ready for immolation. You are so to make a tender of yourselves as if you would say, 'Lord, here I am, wholly thine. I come to surrender myself, my whole life and being, to be entirely and always at thy disposal, and for thy use. Accept a devoted, self-resigning soul!'

Thus we are brought to the thing itself. Which now,—

II. In the next place, with less regard to the allusive terms, we come more distinctly to open and explain. It is briefly but the dedicating of ourselves; or, the "giving our own selves to the Lord."[1] So those Macedonian converts are said to have done. And there is a special notice to be taken therein of the word "first," which puts a remarkableness upon that passage. The apostle is commending their liberal charity towards indigent, necessitous Christians; and shows how their charity was begun in piety. They did not only most freely give away their substance for the relief of such as were in want, but first they gave their own selves to the Lord.

But that we may not misconceive the nature of this act of 'giving ourselves,' we must know it is not donation in the

[1] As it is 2 Cor. viii. 5.

strict and proper sense, such as confers a right upon the *donee*, or to him to whom a thing is said to be given. We cannot be said to collate or transfer a right to him who is before, 'Dominus absolutus,'—the only proprietor and "supreme Lord" of all. It is more properly but a tradition, a surrender or delivery of ourselves, upon the supposal and acknowledgment of his former right; or the putting ourselves into his possession for his appointed uses and services, out of which we had injuriously kept ourselves before. It is but giving him his own,—"All things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee."[1] It is only a consent and obedience to his most rightful claim and demand of us; or a "yielding" ourselves to him, as it is significantly expressed in the mentioned Rom. vi. 13,—though there the word is the same with that in the text (*παρίστημι*, or *παριστάνω*), which here we read "present."

And now, that we may more distinctly open the nature of this self-dedication, we shall show what ought to accompany and qualify it, that we may be a suitable and grateful present to him in evangelical acceptation, worthy of God, such as he requires and will accept:—

1. It must be done with *knowledge and understanding*. It cannot but be an intelligent act. It is an act of religion and worship, as it is called in the text: "Service," we read it, which is much more general; but the word is *λατρεία*—"worship," It is indeed the first and fundamental act of worship; and it is required to be a rational act,—"your reasonable service." Religion cannot move blindfold; and though knowledge and reason are not throughout words of the same signification and latitude, yet the former is partly presupposed upon the latter, and partly improved by it, nor can therefore be severed from it.

In the present case it is especially necessary we distinctly know and apprehend the state of things between God and us: that we understand ourselves to have been, with the rest of men, in an apostasy and revolt from God; that we are

[1] As 1 Chron. xxix. 14.

recalled unto him; that a Mediator is appointed on purpose, through whom we are to approach him, and render ourselves back unto him: that so this may be our sense in our return, 'Lord, I have here brought thee back a stray, a wandering creature,—mine own self. I have heard what the Redeemer of thy own constituting hath done and suffered for the reconciling and reducing of such; and, against thy known design, I can no longer withhold myself.'

2. With *serious consideration*. It must be a deliberate act. How many understand matters of greatest importance, which they never consider, and perish by not considering what they know! *Consideration* is nothing else but the revolving of what we knew before, the actuating the habitual knowledge we had of things; a more distinct reviewing of our former notices belonging to any case, a recollecting and gathering them up, a comparing them together; and, for such as appear more momentous, a repeating, and inculcating them upon ourselves, that we may be urged on to suitable action. And this, though of itself, without the power and influence of the Divine Spirit, not sufficient, yet being the means he works by, is most necessary to our becoming Christians; that is, if we speak of becoming so not by fate or by chance, as too many only are, but by our own choice and design; which is the same thing with dedicating ourselves to God through Christ, whereof we are discoursing. For upon our having thus considered and comprehended the whole compass of the case in our thoughts, either the temper of our hearts would be such that we would hereupon dedicate ourselves, or we would not. If we would, it is because we should judge the arguments for it more weighty than the objections, which, without such pondering of both, we are not likely to apprehend, and so, for want of this consideration, are never likely to become Christians at all. Or, if we would not, it is because to the more carnal temper of our hearts the objections would outweigh. And then, if we do seem to consent, it is because what is to be objected came not in view; and so we should be Christians to no purpose. Our contract with

the Redeemer were void in the making; we should only seem pleased with the terms of Christianity because we have not digested them in our thoughts: so our act undoes itself in the very doing. It carries an implicit, virtual repentance in it of what is done. We enter ourselves Christians upon surprise or mistake; and if we had considered what we are consequently to do, what to forbear, what to forego, what to endure, would not have done it; and therefore when we do come distinctly to apprehend all this, are like actually to repent and revolt: as they,[1] who, while they understood not what it was to be a Christian, seemed very forward followers of Christ; but when they did more fully understand it, upon his telling them plainly, went back and walked no more with him. And he lets them go: as much as to say, 'Mend yourselves, if you can; see where you can get you a better master.'

3. With a *determinate judgment*, at length, *that this ought to be done*. There are two extremes in this matter: some will not consider at all, and so not do this thing; and some will consider always, and so never do it;—stand, 'Shall I? Shall I?'—halt between two opinions. These are both of them very vicious and faulty extremes in reference to the management even of secular affairs, both of them contrary to that prudence which should govern our actions;—that is, when men will never consider what is necessary to be done, and so neglect their most important concernments; or when they will never have done considering, which is the same thing as if they had never taken up any thought of the matter at all. Indeed in the present case, it is a reproach to the blessed God, to consider longer than till we have well digested the state of the case; as if it were difficult to determine the matter, between him and the devil, which were the better or more rightful Lord! We must at last be at a point, and come to a judicious determination of the question, as those sincerely resolved Christians had done, who also express the reasons that had (before that time, no doubt) determined them: "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words

[1] John vi.

of eternal life. And we believe, and are sure, that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God."[1]

4. With *liberty of spirit,* having thrown off all former bonds, and quite disengaged ourselves from other masters: as they speak, "Other lords besides thee have had dominion over us; but by thee only will we make mention of thy name."[2] For our Saviour expressly tells, "No man can serve two masters."[3] When those *Dedititii,* the people of Collatia,[4] were about the business of capitulating in order to the surrender of themselves, the question put on the Romans' part was, 'Estne populus Collatinus in sua potestate,'—'Are the Collatine people in their own power?' Wherein satisfaction being given, the matter is concluded. In the present case, of yielding ourselves to God, the question cannot be concerning any previous tie in point of right, or that could urge conscience. There cannot be so much as a plausible pretender against him. But there must be a liberty, in opposition to the *pre-engaged inclinations* and affections. And this must be the sense of the sincere soul, entreating the matter of its self-surrender and dedication with the great God, to be able to say to the question, 'Art thou under no former contrary bonds?' 'Lord, I am under none, I know, that ought to bind me, or that justly can, against thy former sovereign right. I had indeed suffered other bonds to take place in my heart and the affections of my soul; but they were bonds of iniquity, which I scruple not to break, and repent that ever I made. I took myself indeed to be my own, and have lived to myself,—only pleased and served and sought myself, as if I were created and born for no other purpose; and if the sense of my heart had been put into words, there was insolence enough to have conceived such as these: "Not my tongue only, but my whole man, body and soul, all my parts and powers, my estate and name, and strength and time, are all my own; who is lord over me?" And while I pleased self with such an imagined liberty and self-dominion, no idol was too despicable to command my homage. I have done worse

[1] John vi. 68, 69. [2] Isa. xxvi. 13. [3] Matt. vi. 24. [4] Livius, lib. i. 38.

than prostrated my body to a stock,—my soul hath humbled itself and bowed down to a clod of clay. My thoughts and desires, and hopes and joys, have all stooped to so mean trifles as wealth, or ease, or pleasure, or fame,—all but so many fragments of earth, or the less consistent vapours sprung from it. And whereas this world is nothing else but a bundle of lusts, none of them was too base to rule me; and while I thought myself at liberty, I have been a servant to corruption. But now, Lord, I have, through thy mercy, learned to abandon and abhor myself. Thy grace appearing, hath taught me to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts. Thou hast overcome: enjoy thine own conquest. I am grieved for it, and repent from my soul that ever I did put thee to contend for and conquer thine own.' And so doth this self-dedication carry in it repentance from dead works, and towards God.

5. With a plenary *full bent of heart and will:* as that, "I have sworn, and I will perform, that I will keep thy righteous judgments;" or that, "I have inclined mine heart to perform thy statutes alway, unto the end."[1] And herein doth this *self-dedication* more principally consist; namely, in a resolved willingness to yield myself as God's own property, to be for him, and not for another: which resolvedness of will, though it may in several respects admit of several names, or be clothed with distinct notions, is but one and the same substantial act. It may be called, in respect of the *competition* which there was in the case, *choice;* or in respect of the *proposal* made to me of such a thing to be done, *consent.* But these are, abstracting from these references, the *same act;* which in itself considered is only a resolute volition,—"I will be the Lord's:" which resolution, if one do, whether mentally or vocally, direct to God or Christ, then it puts on the nature of a vow; and so is fitly called devoting one's self.

It carries in it, as a thing supposed, the implanted divine life and nature, whereby we are truly said "to present ourselves living sacrifices," as in the text; or as it is expressed in that other place, to "yield ourselves to God, as those that

[1] Ps. cxix. 106, 112.

are alive from the dead,"[1]—"alive to God through Jesus Christ our Lord."[2] Which life is not to be understood simply, but in a certain respect. For before, we were not dead *simply;* we were not dead, disinclined, or disaffected *to everything,* but peculiarly towards God and his Christ. That way we were without any inclination, motion, tendency, or disposition: and so were dead *quoad hoc,—as to this thing;* or, in this respect were alienated from the life of God. Now we come to live this life, and are made by his grace to incline and move towards him of our own accord. Dead things, or destitute of life, may be moved by another, are capable of being moved violently, without or against inclination, hither or thither; but a living creature can spontaneously move itself, as of its own accord it inclines.

And whereas there are two more noble principles that belong to this divine life and nature, *faith* and *love,*—a great and noted pair, as may be seen in divers places of the New Testament,—these have both an ingrediency into this *self-dedication.* The nature of each of them runs into it, and may be perceived in it. And it is hereupon a mixed act, partaking an influence and tincture, as it were, from the one and the other of them.

Faith respects the promises of God, and what we are thereupon to expect from him; and so our dedicating ourselves to God, is a self-committing. We give up ourselves to him as a trust, as the apostle's emphatical expression intimates, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him"—*παρακαταθήκην μου,* 'my pawn' or 'pledge,' my 'fidei commissum'—"against that day."[3] The soul flies to God as in a distress, not knowing to be safe another way. As once a people, not able to obtain tutelage on other terms, surrendered themselves to them whose help they sought, with some such expression, 'Si non nostros, saltem vestros,'—'If not as ours, yet at least as your own, save, protect, and defend us.' Nor, in our surrendering ourselves to God, is this any way unsuitable

[1] Rom. vi. 13. [2] As Rom. vi. 11. [3] 2 Tim. i. 12.

either to *us* or to *him*. Not to *us:* for we are really distressed, ready to perish; it is agreeable to the state of our case. Not to *him:* for it is glorious to him, a thing worthy of God, to be a refuge and sanctuary to perishing souls; and is thereupon a pleasant thing, a Godlike pleasure, suitable to a self-sufficient and all-sufficient Being, who hath enough for himself, and for all others whom he shall have taught not to despise the riches of his goodness. He "taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy."[1] He waits that he may be gracious, and is exalted in showing mercy.[2] He lifts up himself when he does it, and waits that he may; expects the opportunity, seeks out meet and suitable objects,—as with thirst and appetite, an enterprising, valiant man is wont to do encounters,—for none were ever so intent to destroy as He is to save; yea, makes them, prepares them for his purpose; which he doth not, and needs not do, in point of misery,—*so* they can enough prepare themselves; but in point of humility, sense of their necessity and unworthiness, great need, and no desert, nor disposition to supplicate.

These are needful preparations, make it decorous and comely to him to show mercy. A God is to be sought, with humble, prostrate veneration. And such an opportunity he waits for. It is not fit for him, not great, not majestic, to throw away his mercies upon insolent and insensible wretches: for, as there it follows, he is the "God of judgment,"—a most accurate, judicious wisdom and prudence conducts and guides all the emanations of his flowing goodness; the part of which wisdom and judgment is to nick the opportunity, to take the fit season when mercy will be most fitly placed, best attain its end, relish best, be most acceptable to them that shall receive it, and honourable to him that shows it. And therefore as is added, "Blessed are all they that wait for him,"—that labour to be in a posture to meet him on his own terms and in his own way.

Let such as have a mind to surrender and yield themselves to him consider this. Apprehend you have undone yourselves,

[1] Ps. cxlvii. 11. [2] Isa. xxx. 18.

and are lost. Fall before him. Lie at the footstool of the mercy-seat. Willingly put your mouths in the dust, if so be there may be hope. And there is hope. He seeks after you, and will not reject what he seeks; he only waited to bring you to this. It is now a fit time for him, and a good time for you. And you may now, in resigning, entrust yourselves also to him; for his express promise is your sufficient ground for it: "I will receive you, and be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters." [1] Understand the matter aright. Your presenting and yielding yourselves to him is not to be a desperate act. It is not casting yourselves away. You are not throwing yourself into flames, but upon tender mercies; thither you may commit yourself. The thing that is pleasing to him, and which he invites you to,—as he invites all the ends of the earth to look to him that they may be saved,[2]—cannot be unsafe or unhappy to you.

Again: *love* hath a great ingrediency into this self-resignation; and as it hath, so it more admits to be called dedicating, or devoting ourselves. This holy, ingenuous principle respects more the *commands* of God, as the other doth his *promises;* and eyes His interest, as the other doth our own. This dedition of ourselves, as it is influenced by it, designs the doing all for Him we can, as by the other it doth the receiving all. As by the other we resign ourselves to Him for safety and felicity; so we do by this, for service and duty, to our uttermost. And an ardent lover of God thinks this a little oblation. 'Myself!—alas! what am I? Too small a thing for Him who is all love, and who though He hath it in hand to transform and turn me into love too, such as so drossy and limited a thing was capable of being made, how mean yet and little is the subject He hath to work upon! An atom of dust! Not combustible, or apt to be wrought upon to this—to a divine and heavenly love—by any but His flame: and now therefore, but a minute spark from the element of love; that must however, thus transformed, tend towards its own original and native seat! It shall now flame upward.' And

[1] 2 Cor. vi. 17, 18. [2] Isa. xlv. 22.

this is all the flame in which it is universally necessary thy sacrifice should ascend; which will refine only, not consume it. Though that it may be offered up in other flames, is not impossible; nor will it be much regretted by you, if the case should so require; nor shall be despised by him, if he shall so state the case. To give the body to be burned, without love, goes for nothing; but if in that way we were called to offer up our bodies living sacrifices to God, it would, in an inferior sense, be an offering of a sweet-smelling savour, would even perfume heaven, and diffuse fragrant odours on earth; nor would be grudged at by that love that first made our ὁλόκληρον, the "whole of ourselves," an offering to God; and whose property it is to be all things, to do all things, to bear all things, to endure all things, for him, whose we wholly are. So that if he design any of us to be an ὁλοκαύτωμα too, a "whole burnt-offering," and will have us to glorify him in the fire, love will not retract its vow, but say after our great pattern, "Not my will, but thine be done:" and as he,—in his peculiar case and design not communicable with us, though the temper of spirit should be,—"Lo, I come to do thy will, O God! A body hast thou"—it now appears for this very purpose—"prepared for me." "He loved us, and gave himself for us:" so are we, from our love of him, to give ourselves for him, and his use and service, in whatsoever kind he shall appoint and prescribe. Every true Christian is in the preparation of his mind a martyr; but they are few whom he actually calls to it. Our love is ordinarily to show itself in our keeping his commandments; and with that design we are to present ourselves to him, as the resolved, ready instruments of his service and praise: "Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God."[1] Thus, having been more large upon what was more essential in this dedication of ourselves, I shall be briefer in most of the other things belonging to it.

[1] As Rom. vi. 13.

6. It must further be done with *a concomitant acceptance of God.* His covenant which is now entered, is oftentimes summed up, "I will be your God, and ye shall be my people;" and is resembled and frequently represented by the nuptial contract, in which there is mutual giving and taking. We are to resign and accept at the same time; to take him to be our God, when we yield ourselves to be his.

7. With *an explicit reference to the Lord Christ.* We are to dedicate ourselves after the tenour of a covenant whereof he is the Mediator. God doth not upon other terms treat with sinners. You are not to offer at such a thing as dedicating yourselves to him, but in the way and upon the terms upon which you are to be accepted. The Divine pleasure is declared and known, how great a one he must be in all the transactions of God with men; yea, and towards the whole creation: "He hath made us accepted in the Beloved: in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure, which he hath purposed in himself: that, in the dispensation of the fulness of times, he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in him."[1] We must take heed how we neglect or overlook him who is by Divine appointment so high in power, and with whom we have so great a concern.

8. With *deep humility and abasement of ourselves* in conjunction with a *profound reverence and veneration of the Divine Majesty.* There ought to be the lowliest self-abasement, such as that good man expresses—varied to one's own case,—"O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God: for mine iniquities are increased over mine head, and my trespass is grown up unto the heavens."[2] And indeed this is naturally consequent upon what was last said, of the regard that ought to be had in this matter to the

[1] Ephes. i. 6—10. [2] Ezra ix. 6.

Mediator; for surely that very constitution is in itself a humbling thing to us, and we cannot apply ourselves to God suitably to it, but with a self-abasing sense of our own state and case. Our coming and tendering ourselves to God in a Mediator, is in its very nature a humiliation, and carries with it a tacit confession that in ourselves we have nothing, deserve nothing, are nothing, are worse than nothing; and that only this constitution of his could justify our offering ourselves to him with any hope of acceptance; or make it less than insolent presumption for sinners to approach him, and expect to be received into his presence and service. It is not for such as we to behave ourselves towards him as if we either had not offended, or were capable of expiating our own offence. Yea, and if there had been nothing of delinquency in the case, yet great humility becomes such applications to him, and *that* in conjunction with the profoundest reverence and veneration of him; for our very business in this *self-dedication* is "worship," as the word in the text hath been noted to signify. And it is the first and most principal part of all the worship we owe to him, (as was noted from 2 Cor. viii. 5,) fundamental to all the rest. We must have before our eyes the awful majesty and glorious greatness of God, which Scripture often speaks of as *one notion* of his *holiness*, and which we are to have principal reference unto in all the solemn homage we pay to him; as sacrifices are well observed to have been offered to him *so considered*.[1] And therefore, by this consideration, their suitableness to him is to be measured, as he doth himself insist: "Cursed be the deceiver, which hath in his flock a male, and voweth, and sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing: for I am a great king, saith the Lord of hosts, and my name is dreadful among the heathen."[2]

9. With *great joy and gladness of heart.* It ought to be accompanied with the highest gusts and relishes of pleasure, both from the apprehensive congruity of the thing and the expectation we have of acceptance. The *thing itself* should

[1] Outr. *De Sac.*

[2] Mal. i. 4.

be pleasant to us. We are to do it as tasting our own act; as they did: "The people rejoiced, for that they offered willingly."[1] The self-devoting person should be able to utter this as his sense, 'Glad am I that I am anything, that I have a being, a soul, a reasonable, intelligent being, capable of becoming a sacrifice to him.' And that there is *hope of being accepted*,—how great a joy is that! The apostle makes so great a thing of it, that he speaks[2] as if he cared not whether he was in the body or out of the body, so he might be accepted. Nuptials, (that resemble, as hath been said, this transaction between God and the soul, wherein there is mutual giving and accepting,) are wont to be seasons of great festivity and gladness. The great God himself rejoices in this closure, with such a joy: "As the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee."[3] And shall not we? How infinitely more amiable and delectable is the object of *our* choice than *his!* when *we* are to rejoice in the supreme and most perfect excellency; *he*, in what is clothed over, if he did not superinduce another clothing, with most loathsome deformity.

10. With an *ingenuous candour and simplicity*, with that sincerity which is to be as the salt of our sacrifice;[4] without latent reserves, or a hidden meaning disagreeing to his; which were both unjust and vain. Unjust, for we may not deceive any; and vain, for we cannot deceive him. The case admits not of restrictions; it must be done absolutely, without any limitation or reserve. You have heard this *self-dedication* is in part an act of love. And what limit can be set to a love whose object is infinite? A natural limit it is true, as it is the love of a creature, it cannot but have; but a chosen one it ought never to have, as if we had loved enough. You know what kind of love is, and cannot but be, due to the all-comprehending God—"with all thy heart, soul, mind, and might," etc.: so without exception, that Maimonides,[5] reciting those words, adds, 'Etiamsi tollat animam tuam'—

[1] 1 Chron. xxix. 9. [2] 2 Cor. v. 8, 9. [3] Isa. lxii. 5.
[4] Mark ix. 49. [5] De Fund. Legis, p. 64.

'The stream of thy love to him must not be diverted, or alter course, *though he would take away thy very life or soul.*'

11. With the concomitant *surrender to him of all that we have.* For they that by their own act and acknowledgment are not themselves their own, but devoted, must also acknowledge they are owners of nothing else. In that mentioned form of surrender in Livy, when Egerius, on the Romans' part, had inquired,[1] 'Are you the ambassadors sent by the people of Collatia, that you may yield up yourselves and the Collatine people?' and it was answered, 'We are:' and it was again asked, 'Are the Collatine people in their own power?' and answered, 'They are:' it is further inquired, 'Do you deliver up yourselves, the people of Collatia, your city, your fields, your water, your bounds, your temples, your utensils, all things that are yours, both divine and human, into mine and the people of Rome's power?' they say, 'We deliver up all.' And he answers, 'So I receive you.' So do they who deliver up themselves to God, much more, all that they called theirs. God indeed is the only proprietor; men are but usufructuaries. They have the *use* of what his providence allots them. He reserves to himself the *property;* and limits the use so far, as that all are to be accountable to him for all they possess, and are to use nothing they have but as under him and for him, as also they are to do themselves. Therefore as they are required to "glorify him with their bodies and spirits, which are his;" so they are to "honour him with their substance," upon the same reason. But few effectually apprehend his right in their persons; which as we are therefore to recognise in this dedication of ourselves to him, so we are, *in a like general sense,* to devote to him all that we enjoy in the world;—that is, as all are not to devote themselves specially to serve him in a sacred office,

[1] Estisne vos legati oratoresque missi à populo Collatino, ut vos populumque Collatinum dederitis? Sumus.....Deditisne vos populumque Collatinum, urbem, agros, aquam, terminos, delubra, utensilia, divina humanaque omnia, in meam populique Romani ditionem? Dedimus. At ego recipio.—Liv. ubi priùs.

but all are obliged to devote themselves to his service in the general; so, though all are not required to devote their estates to this or that particular pious use, they are obliged to use them wholly for his glory in the general, and for the service of his interest in the world. We are obliged neither to withhold from him nor misspend these his mercies; but must "live righteously," (wherein charity is comprehended,) "soberly, and godly," in it; decline no opportunities that shall occur to us, within the compass of our own sphere and station, of doing him (though never so costly and hazardous) service; must forsake all and follow him, when our duty and our continued possession of this world's goods come to be inconsistent; must submit patiently to our lot, when that falls out to be our case, or to any providence by which we are bereaved of our worldly comforts, with that temper of mind as to be able cheerfully to say, "The Lord hath given, the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

It is indeed the greatest absurdity imaginable, that they who are not masters of themselves, should think it permitted them to use what comes to their hands as they list, for the service of their own lusts, and the gratifying of a rebel flesh, that hath rejected the government of their own reason and of all divine laws at once: or that he who hath so absolute a right in them, should not have that right in what he hath committed to them, as to prescribe rules to them, by which to use and employ it. At the same time and in the same sense wherein we make a dedition of ourselves, we do the same thing as to all that we have. Even according to common human estimate, according to what interest men have in others, or power over them, they have a correspondent interest in what they possess. They that *absolutely surrender themselves* to the power of another, leave not themselves capable of proper dominion as to anything. Therefore says the civil law, 'Non licet dedititiis testamenta facere.' They were so under several notions, it is true; but they that were strictly so, *had not power to make a will,* as

having nothing to dispose of. No man has certainly a power to dispose of anything—and when they surrender themselves by their own act and deed to God, they acknowledge so much —otherwise than as divine rules direct or permit. They have a right in what is duly theirs, against the counter-claim of man; but none sure against the claim and all-disposing power of God, whether signified by his law or by his providence. Therefore with this temper of mind should this *self-dedication* be made: 'Lord, I here lay myself, and all that belongs to me, most entirely at thy feet. All things are of thee:' as they are brought in saying, who make that willing, joyful offering.[1] 'What I have in the world is more thine than mine. I desire neither to use nor possess anything, but by thy leave, and for thy sake.'

12. With *befitting circumstantial solemnity;* that is, it ought to be direct, express, and explicit,—not to be huddled up in tacit, mute intimations only. We should not content ourselves that it be no more than implied in what we do otherwise, and run on with it as a thing that must be supposed and taken for granted, never actually performed and done. It is very true indeed, that a continued, uniform course and series of agreeable actions, a holy life and practice, carries a great deal more of significancy with it, than only having once said, without this, *conceptis verbis*, 'Lord, I will be thine.' Practice, whether it be good or bad, more fully speaks our sense and expresses our hearts, than bare words spoken at some particular time can do: for they at the most speak but our present sense at that time,—and perhaps do not always that; but a course of practice shows the habitual posture and steady bent of our spirits.

Nor do I think that a formal, explicit transaction in this matter, whether vocal or mental, with circumstantial solemnity, is essential to a man's being a Christian, or a holy man. A fixed inclination and bent of heart towards God, followed as it will be with a course of practice becoming them that are His, will no doubt conclude a man's state to be

[1] 1 Chron. xxix.

safe and good God-ward; as one may, on the other hand, be the devil's servant all his days, without having made a formal covenant with him. But yet, though so explicit and solemn a transaction of this matter be not *essential* to our Christianity,—as what is said to belong only to the solemnity of anything, is therein implied not to be of the essence of it,—yet it may be a great duty for all that; and I doubt it not to be so.

And it may here be worth the while to insist a little,—that if this indeed be a duty, it may obtain more in our practice than perhaps it doth. Some, through mere inanimadverteney may not have considered it; others that have, may possibly think it less needful, because they reckon it was formerly done for them. They were born of Christian parents, who dedicated them to God from their birth; and they were with solemnity presented to him in their baptism. What need we then do over again a thing already done?

Let us reason this matter therefore a while, and consider whether, notwithstanding any such allegation, our personal dedicating ourselves to God in Christ be not still reasonable and necessary to be performed by ourselves also, as our own solemn act and deed. It were indeed much to be wished that our baptismal dedication to God were more minded and thought on than it commonly is; when with such sacred solemnity we were devoted to the triune Deity, and those great and awful names were named upon us,—the name of the Father, the name of the Son, and the name of the Holy Ghost. Baptisms are, it is to be feared, too often in the Christian world turned into a mere pageantry, and the matter scarce ever thought on more, when the show is over; and very probably because this great succedaneous duty is so unpractised among Christians.

And first, let it be considered, are there no like cases? Do we not know, that though all the infants in a kingdom are born subjects, yet when they arrive to a certain age they are obliged, being called, to take the oath of allegiance, and each one to come under personal obligation to their prince? And

do we owe less to the God that made us, and the Lord that bought us with his blood?

Again, though all the sons of Israelites were in their infancy dedicated to God by the then appointed rite for that purpose, yet how frequent were their solemn, personal recognitions of his covenant; their avouching themselves to be his people, as he also avouched himself to be their God; which we see in Deut. xxvi., and many other places. It is remote from me to intend the pressing of a covenant that contains any disputable or doubtful matters, or any other than the substance of our baptismal covenant itself, consisting of the known essentials of our Christianity, all summed up in taking God in Christ for our God, and resigning ourselves to him, to be inviolably his: no more is meant than that this may be done as our own reasonable service and worship; as our intelligent, deliberate, judicious act and choice.

And consider further to this purpose, the great importance of the thing itself, compared with the lesser concernments wherein we use to deal most explicitly. Is it fit that a man's religion should be less the matter of his solemn choice than his inferior concerns? that when he *chooses* his dwelling, his calling, his servant, or master, he should seem thrown upon his God and his religion by chance? and that least should appear of caution, care, and punctual dealing, in our very greatest concernment? How great a day in a man's life doth he count his marriage-day! How accurate are men wont to be in all the preparations and previous settlements that are to be made in order to it! And since the great God is pleased to be so very particular with us, in proposing the model and contents of his covenant, the promises and precepts which make his part and ours in it; how attentive should we be to his proposals, and how express in our consent! especially when we consider his admirable condescension in it, that he is pleased, and disdains not, to capitulate with the work of his hands,—to article with dust and ashes! Is it reasonable we should be slight and superficial in a

treaty with that great Lord of heaven and earth, or scarce ever purposely apply and set ourselves to mind him in it at all?

Moreover, it is *your own* concernment, and therefore ought to be transacted *by yourself.* So far as there is any equity in that rule, 'Quod tangit omnes debet ab omnibus tractari,'—'What concerns all should be transacted by all;' it resolves into this, and supposes it, 'Quod tangit meipsum debet tractari à meipso,'—'That which concerns myself should be transacted by myself.'

Again, your being devoted by parents no more excuses from solemn, personal, self-devoting, than their doing other acts of religion for you, excuses you from doing them for yourselves. They have prayed for you; are you therefore never to pray for yourselves? They have lamented your sin; are you never therefore to lament your own?

Further, Scripture warns us not to lay too much stress upon parental privilege, or place too much confidence in it; which it supposes men over apt to do. Abraham's seed may be a "generation of vipers."[1] "I know that ye are Abraham's seed;"[2] yet he finds them another father.

Consider, moreover, the renewing work of God's grace and Spirit upon souls consists in sanctifying their natural faculties, their understandings, consciences, wills, affections. And what are these sanctified for, but to be used and exercised? And to what more noble purpose? If there be that holy impress upon the soul that inclines all the powers of it Godward, what serves it for, but to prompt and lead it on to the correspondent acts?—to apprehend and eye God; to admit a conviction of duty, and particularly how I owe myself to him; to choose, love, fear, and serve him? And what doth all this import less than an entire *self-resignation* to him? So that the genuine tendency of the holy new nature is in nothing so directly answered and satisfied as in this.

And it ought to be considered, that the faculties of our

[1] Matt. iii. 7–9. [2] John viii. 37, 44.

reasonable souls have a *natural* improvement and perfection, as well as a *gracious*. And for their highest and noblest acts, it is fit they should be used in their highest perfection. It is possible, that in the children of religious parents there may be some pious inclinations betimes; and the sooner they thereupon choose the God of their fathers the better; that is, if you compare doing it and not doing it, it is better done than not done. But because this is a thing that cannot be too often done, nor too well, the more mature your understanding is, the better it will be done, the grace of God concurring. Our Lord himself "increased in wisdom," etc.

Moreover, let it be seriously thought on,—what it is dreadful to think,—the occasion you should give, if you decline this surrendering yourselves, to have your *neglect* taken for a *refusal*. It is impossible when you once understand the case, you can be in an indifferency about it. You must either take or leave.

Nor can it be denied but personal self-devoting, one way or other, more or less solemn, is most necessary to the continuing serious Christianity in the world. Without it our religion were but 'res unius ætatis,'—'the business of an age;' for how unlikely were it, and absurd to suppose, that a man should seriously devote *his child* to God, that never devoted *himself!* And if that were done never so seriously, must one be a Christian always, only by the Christianity of another, not his own? Some way or other then, a man must devote himself to God in Christ, or be at length no Christian. And since he must, the nature of the thing speaks that the more solemn and express it is, the better, and more suitable to a transaction with so great a Majesty.

And hath not common reason taught the world to fix a *transitus*, and *settle some time or other*, wherein persons should be reckoned to have passed out of their state of infancy or minority into the state of manhood, or an adult state; wherein, though before they could not legally transact affairs for themselves, yet afterwards they could? This time, by

the constitutions of several nations, and for several purposes, hath been diversely fixed. But they were not to be looked upon as children always. Some time they come to write *man*. Is it reasonable one should be a child and a minor in the things of God and religion all his days,—always in nonage? Sometime they must be "men in understanding;"[1] and "have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."[2]

Yea, and there is far greater reason we should personally and solemnly transact this great affair with God, than any concern we have with men. For among men we may have a right by natural descent, or by valuable considerations, to what we enjoy, which may be clear and little liable to question: from God we have no right but by his favour and vouchsafement. You are his children, if ever you come to be so, but *by adoption*. And human adoption has been wont to be completed by a solemnity; the person to adopt being publicly asked, in that sort of adoption which was also called arrogation, 'utrum eum quem adoptaturus esset, justum sibi filium esse vellet?'—'whether he would have this person to be as his own very son?' And again; 'ille qui adoptabatur, utrum id fieri pateretur,'—'he that was to be adopted, whether he was contented it should be so?'[3]

Nor again is there that disinclination towards men as towards God, or that proneness to revolt from settled agreements with the one as with the other. Whereas love sums up all the duty of both the tables, or which we owe both to God and man, it is evident that, in our present lapsed state, our love to God is more impaired than to man. Indeed this latter seems only diminished, the other is destroyed, and hath, by nature, no place in us; grace only restores it. Where it is in some measure restored, we find it more difficult to exercise love towards God than man; which the apostle's reasoning implies, "He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?"[4] Who sees not that sensuality hath buried the

[1] 1 Cor. xiv. 20. [2] Heb. v. 14. [3] Cal. Lex. Jurid. [4] 1 John iv. 20.

rational world? Unregenerate man is said to be in the flesh; not as being only lodged in it, as all are alike, but *governed by it*, under its power: as the holy apostle is said to have been "in the Spirit on the Lord's day."[1] To be in the flesh, is expounded by being and walking after it.[2] Hence men only love and savour the things within this sensible sphere. They that are after the flesh, do savour only the things of the flesh. Where the regenerate, divine life is implanted, it doth 'malè habitare,'—is 'ill lodged;' in conjunction with a strong remaining sensual inclination: so that where the soul is somewhat raised by it out of that mire and dirt, there is a continual decidency, a proneness to relapse and sink back into it. Impressions therefore of an invisible Ruler and Lord, as of all unseen things, are very evanid,—soon in a great degree worn off; especially where they were but *in making*, and not yet thoroughly inwrought into the temper of the soul. Hence is that instability in the covenant of God. We are not so afraid before, nor ashamed afterwards, of breaking engagements with him, as with men, whom we are often to look in the face and converse with every day.

Therefore there is the more need *here* of the strictest ties and most solemn obligations that we can lay upon ourselves. How apprehensive doth that holy, excellent governor, Joshua, seem of this, when he was shortly to leave the people under his conduct![3] And what urgent means doth he use to bring them to the most express, solemn dedication of themselves to God, that was possible; first representing the reasonableness and equity of the thing, from the many endearing wonders of mercy (as here the apostle beseeches these Romans "by the mercies of God") which he recounts from the beginning to the 14th verse of that 24th chapter: then, thereupon exhorting them to "fear the Lord and serve him in sincerity," etc., in that 14th verse; telling them withal, if they should all resolve otherwise to a man, what his own resolution was,—"And if it seem evil unto you to serve

[1] Rev. i. 10. [2] Rom. viii. [3] Josh. xxiv.

the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served, that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord;"[1] taking also their express answer, which they give.[2] But fearing they did not enough consider the matter, he, as it were, puts them back,—esteeming himself to have gotten an advantage upon them,—that they might come on again with the more vigour and force: "Ye cannot serve the Lord: for he is a holy God; he is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins. If ye forsake the Lord, and serve strange gods, then he will turn and do you hurt, and consume you, after that he hath done you good."[3] Hereupon, according to his expectation and design, they re-enforce their vow, "Nay, but we will serve the Lord." And upon this he closes with them, and takes fast hold of them. "Ye are witnesses," saith he, "against yourselves, that ye have chosen you the Lord, to serve him." And they say, "We are witnesses."[4] He exhorts them afresh, and they engage over again.[5] Thus a covenant is made with them.[6] After all this, a record is taken of the whole transaction; it is booked down;[7] and a monumental stone set up, to preserve the memory of this great transaction. And the good man tells them, "Behold, this stone shall be a witness unto us; for it hath heard all the words of the Lord which he spake unto us: it shall be therefore a witness unto you, lest ye deny your God." So he dismisses them, and lets them go every one to his inheritance.

Nor is it to be neglected, that in Isa. xliv. 5,—which is generally agreed to refer to the times of the gospel,—it is so expressly set down, "One shall say, I am the Lord's; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel." In the rendering of which words, "Subscribe with the hand," the versions vary. Some

[1] Josh. xxiv. 15. [2] Verses 16—18. [3] Verses 19, 20. [4] Verse 22. [5] Verses 23, 24. [6] Verse 25. [7] Verse 26.

read, "Inscribe in their hands the Lord's name;" counting it an allusion to the ancient custom, as to servants and soldiers, that they were to carry, stamped upon the palm of their hands, the name of their master or general. The Syriac reads to the same sense as we,—"Shall give a handwriting to be the Lord's." That the thing be done, and with great seriousness, distinctness, and solemnity, is no doubt highly reasonable and necessary; about the particular manner I prescribe not.

Nor can I imagine what any man can have to object, but the backwardness of his own heart to any intercourse or conversation with the invisible God: which is but an argument of the miserable condition of depraved mankind; none that the thing is not to be done. For that backwardness must proceed from some deeper reason than that God is invisible; a reason that should not only convince but amaze us, and even overwhelm our souls in sorrow and lamentation, to think what state the nature and spirit of man is brought into! For is not the devil invisible too? And what wretch is there so silly and ignorant, but can, by the urgency of discontent, envy, and an appetite of revenge, find a way to fall into a league with him? Is this that God is less conversable with men, less willing to be found of them that seek him? No, surely;[1] but that men have less mind and inclination to seek him! And is this a posture and temper of spirit towards the God that made us,—the continual spring of our life and being,—in which it is fit for us to tolerate ourselves? Shall not the necessity of this thing, and of our own case,—not capable of remedy while we withhold ourselves from God,—overcome all the imagined difficulty in applying ourselves to him?

Use.—And upon the whole, if we agree the thing itself to be necessary, it cannot be doubted but it will appear to be of common concernment to us all; and that every one must apprehend it is necessary *to me*, and *to me*, whether we have done it already, or not done it. If we have not, it cannot be

[1] Read considerately Heb. xi. 6.

done too soon; if we have, it cannot be done too often. And it may now be done by private, silent ejaculation; the convinced, persuaded heart saying within itself, 'Lord, I consent to be wholly thine; I here resign and devote myself absolutely and entirely to thee.' None of you know what may be in the heart of another to this purpose, even at this time. Why then should not every one fear to be the only person, of those who now hear, that disagrees to it? If any finds his heart to reluctate and draw back, it is fit such a one should consider, 'I do not know but this self-devoting disposition and resolution is the common sense of all the rest, even of all that are now present, but mine.' And who would not dread to be the only one in an assembly that shall refuse God, or refuse himself to Him? For, let such a one think, 'What particular reason can I have to exclude myself from such a consenting chorus? Why should I spoil the harmony, and give a disagreeing vote? Why should any man be more willing to be dutiful and happy than I,—to be just to God, or have him good to me? Why should any one be more willing to be saved than I; and to make one hereafter in the glorious, innumerable, joyful assembly of devoted angels and saints, that pay an eternal, gladsome homage to the throne of the celestial King?' But if any find their hearts inclining, let what is now begun be more fully completed in the closet; and let those walls, as Joshua's stone, hear and bear witness!

Lest any should not consent, and that all may consent more freely and more largely, I shall in a few words show—*what should induce to it*, and *what it should induce*:—

1. What should induce to it? You have divers sorts of inducements.

Such as may be taken from *necessity*. For what else can you do with yourself? You cannot be happy without it; for who should make you so but God? and how shall he, while you hold off yourselves from him? You cannot but be miserable, not only as not having engaged him to you, but as having engaged him against you.

Such as may be taken from *equity*. You are his right: he hath a natural right in you, as he is your Maker, the Author of your being; and an acquired right, as you were bought by his Son, who hath "redeemed us to God,"[1] and who "died, rose again, and revived, that he might be Lord of the living and the dead," here to rule, hereafter to judge us;—both which he can do, whether we will or no. But it is not to be thought he will save us against our wills. His method is, whom he saves, first to overcome; that is, to make them "willing in the day of his power." And dare we, who "live, move, and have our being in him," refuse to be, live, and move to him? or "deny the Lord who bought us?"

And again; such as may be taken from *ingenuity*, or that should work upon it;—namely, what we are besought by in the text,—"the mercies of God." How manifold are they! But they are the mercies of the *gospel* especially, mentioned in the foregoing chapter, which are thus referred unto in the beginning of this,—the transferring what the Jews forfeited and lost by their unbelief, unto us Gentiles; that mystery, as this apostle elsewhere calls it, "which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel:"[2] in reference whereto he so admiringly cries out, a little above the text,[3] Ὦ βάθος,—"O the depth both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"—the mercies of which it is said,[4] "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend your money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will

[1] Rev. v. 9. [2] Eph. iii. 4—6. [3] Rom. xi. 33. [4] Isa. lv. 1—3.

make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David:" which free and sure mercies are heightened, as to us, by the same both endearing and awful circumstance; namely, that these mercies are offered to us, in conjunction with the setting before our eyes the monitory, tremendous example of a forsaken nation that rejected them, intimated * in the words,* "Behold, thou shalt call a nation that thou knowest not; and nations that knew not thee shall run unto thee:"[1] a case whereof our apostle says in a foregoing chapter,[2] "Esaias was very bold," when, speaking of it in another place, he uses these words, "I am sought of them that asked not for me; I am found of them that sought me not: I said, Behold me, behold me, unto a nation that was not called by my name."[3] He was bold in it indeed, to mention such a thing to a people unto whom a jealous gloriation in the peculiarity of their privileged state, their being without partners or rivals for so long a time in their relation and nearness to God, was grown so natural: and who took it so impatiently, when our Saviour did but intimate the same thing to them by parables,[4] as that they sought immediately to lay hands on him for that very reason. So unaccountable a perverseness of humour reigned with them, that they envied to others what they despised themselves.

But, on the other hand, nothing ought more highly to recommend those mercies to us, or more engage us to accept them with gratitude and improve them with a cautious fear of committing a like forfeiture, than to have them brought to our hands, redeemed from the contempt of the former despisers of them; and *that* so terribly vindicated upon them at the same time,—as it also still continues to be. That the natural branches of the olive should be torn off, and we inserted;—that there should be such an instance given us of the "goodness and severity of God"[5]—"on them which fell, severity, but to us goodness, if we continue in his goodness"—to warn us that otherwise we may expect to be cut off too,

[1] Isa. lv. 5. [2] Rom. x. 20. [3] Isa. lxv. 1.
[4] Matt. xxi. 45, 46. [5] Chap. xi. 22.

and that we might apprehend, if he spared not the natural branches, he was as little likely to spare us;—that when "he came to his own, and they received him not," he should make so free an offer to us, that if we would yet receive him (which if we do, we are, as hath been said, to yield up and dedicate ourselves to him at the same time) we should have the privilege to be owned for the sons of God;—what should so oblige us to compliance with him, and make us with an ingenuous trembling fall before him, and, crying to him, "My Lord and my God!" resign ourselves wholly to his power and pleasure?

And even his mercies more *abstractly considered* ought to have that power upon us. Were we not lost? Are we not rescued from a necessity of perishing and being lost for ever, in the most costly way? costly to our Redeemer, but to us without cost! Is it a small thing that he offers *himself* to us, as he doth when he demands us, and requires that we offer ourselves to him; that He, in whom is all the fulness of God, having first offered himself for us, doth now offer himself also to us; that he hath treated us hitherto with such indulgence, waited on us with so long patience, sustained us by so large bounty? And now, upon all, when it might be thought we should be communing with our own hearts, discoursing the matter with ourselves, 'What shall we render?' that he should say to us so shortly and compendiously, 'Render yourselves;' is that too much? Are we too inconsiderable to be his, or his mercies too inconsiderable to oblige us to be so? the mercies that flow so freely from him, for he is the Father of mercies; the mercies that are so suitable to us, pardon to the guilty, light to them that dwell in darkness, life to the dead, a rich portion and all-sufficient fulness for the poor, indigent, and necessitous; the mercies that we are encouraged to *expect* as well as what we enjoy,—the great good laid up in store; the mercies of eternity to be added to those of time; the mercies of both worlds meeting upon us! that here we are to "keep ourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal

life!"[1] that, "looking for that blessed hope," our life may here, in the meantime, be transacted with him; that we may abide in the secret of his presence, and dwelling in love, may dwell in God, who is love; till the season come when we shall be able more fully to understand his love, and return our own.

Nor are the favours of his *providence* to be thought little of in the time of our earthly pilgrimage.

And now, if all this do effectually induce us thus to dedicate ourselves,—

2. We are next to consider what *our having done it ought further to induce us unto.*

In the general, it ought to be an inducement to us—as we may well apprehend—to behave ourselves answerably to such a state as we are hereby *brought into,* if we now first dedicate ourselves to him; and are *confirmed in* by our iterations of it. For he takes no pleasure in fools; therefore having vowed ourselves to him, to serve and live to him, let us pay what we have vowed. Better it had been not to vow, than to vow and not pay, and, instead of the reasonable sacrifice he required of us, to give him only the sacrifice of fools. We are upon special terms and for special ends peculiar to the most high God. They that are thus his, are "a royal priesthood." He hath made us "kings and priests,"[2]—both those offices and dignities have sometime met in the same person,—and "to God and his Father;" that is, for him. Not that both those offices do terminate upon God, or that the work of both is to be performed towards him; but our Lord Jesus, it being the design of his Father we should be brought into that high and honourable station, hath effected it in compliance with his design, and hath served his pleasure and purpose in it. He hath done it *to,* that is, *for* him. So that, "to God and his Father," may be referred to *Christ's action* in making us kings and priests; *not to ours,* being made such. Yet the one of these refers to God immediately, the other to ourselves. Holy and good men are *kings in reference to them-*

[1] Jude 21. [2] Rev. i. 6.

selves, in respect of their self-dominion into which they are now restored; having been, as all unregenerate persons are, slaves to vile and carnal affections and inclinations. The minds of the regenerate are made spiritual; and now with them the refined, rectified, spiritual mind is enthroned,—lift up into its proper authority over all sensual inclinations, appetitions, lusts, and passions. A glorious empire! founded in conquest, and managed afterwards, when the victory is complete,—and in the meantime, in some degree, while "judgment is in bringing forth unto victory,"—by a steady, sedate government in most perfect tranquillity and peace.

But they are *priests in reference to God;* the business of their office, as such, terminates upon him: for him they worship and serve. Worship is either *social*, external, and circumstantial,—that of worshipping societies, considered according to its exterior part; herein one is appointed by special office to do the part of a priest for the rest; in this sense all are not priests;— or else it is *solitary*, internal, substantial, and spiritual,—wherein they either worship alone and apart by themselves, or being in conjunction with others, yet their own spirits within them work directly and aspire upwards to God; and as to this more noble part of their worship, every holy man is his own priest.

And this is the double dignity of every holy, devoted soul. They are thus kings and priests; govern themselves, and serve God. While they govern, they serve: exercise authority over themselves, with most submiss veneration of God: crowned and enthroned; but always in a readiness to cast down their crowns at the footstool of the supreme celestial throne. Into this state they come by *self-dedication*. And now surely it is not for such to demean themselves at a vulgar rate. They are of the ἐκκλησία πρωτοτόκων,—"the church of the first-born, written in heaven,"[1] that is, 'the church of the *first-born ones;*' that is, all composed and made up of such, as that expression signifies; first-born in a true, though not the most eminent, sense; being sons by the *first*, that is,

[1] Heb. xii. 23.

the prime and more excellent sort of birth, in respect whereof they are said to be "begotten again by the word of truth, that they should be a kind of first-fruits of the creatures" of God.[1] And this twofold dignity is the privilege of their *birthright*, as anciently it was. Are you devoted to God? Have you dedicated yourselves? Hereby you are arrived to this dignity. For in the above-mentioned place it is said, "Ye are come."[2] You are actually already adjoined to that church, and are the real present members of that holy community; for you are related and united to him of "whom the family in heaven and earth is named;"[3] are of the household, and the sons of God; *his*, under that peculiar notion, when you have dedicated yourselves to him. You cannot but apprehend there are peculiarities of behaviour, in your after conduct and management of yourselves, that belong to you, and must answer and correspond to your being in this sense his. Some particulars whereof I shall briefly mention.

You should each of you often *reflect upon it*, and bethink yourself what you have done, and whose you now are: 'I am the devoted one of the most high God.' It was one of the precepts given by a pagan[4] to his disciples, 'Think with yourself, upon all occasions, "I am a philosopher."' What a world of sin and trouble might that thought often renewed, prevent, 'I am a Christian, one devoted to God in Christ!' Your having done this thing, should clothe your mind with new apprehensions both of God and yourselves: that he is not now a stranger to you, but your God; that you are not unrelated to him, but his. 'I was an enemy; now am reconciled. I was a common, profane thing; now holiness to the Lord.' It is strange to think how one act doth sometimes habit and tincture a man's mind, whether in the kind of good or evil. To have committed an act of murder;—what a horrid complexion of mind did Cain bear with him hereupon! To have dedicated one's self to God, if seriously and duly done, would it have less power to possess one with a holy, calm, peaceful temper of mind?

[1] James i. 18. [2] Heb. xii. 22. [3] Eph. iii. 15. [4] Epict.

You should, hereupon, *charge yourself with all suitable duty towards him;* for you have given yourself to him to serve him,—that is your very business. You are his, and are to do his work; not your own, otherwise than as it falls in with his, and is his.

You are to *discharge yourself of all unsuitable cares;* for will not *he* take care of his own, who hath put so ill a note upon them that do not? "He that provideth not for his own," his domestics, "those of his own house, hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." Will you think *he* can be like such a one? Who, if not the children of a prince, should live free from care?

You should most deeply *concern yourself about his concernments* without any apprehension or fear that he will neglect those that are most truly yours; and are not to be indifferent how his interest thrives or is depressed in the world, is increased or diminished. They that are his, should let his affairs engross their cares and thoughts.

You should *abandon all suspicious, hard thoughts of him.* When in the habitual bent of your spirits you desire to please him, it is most injurious to him to think he will abandon and give you up to perish, or become your enemy. It is observable what care was taken among the Romans, 'Ne quid dedititiis hostile illatum sit,'—'that no hostility might be used towards them that had surrendered themselves.' Can men excel God in praiseworthy things? You can think nothing of God more contrary to his gospel or his nature than to surmise he will destroy one that hath surrendered to, and bears a loyal mind towards, him. And what a reproach do you cast upon him, when you give others occasion to say,—'His own, they that have devoted themselves to him, dare not trust him!' You are taught to say, "I am thine, save me;" not to suspect he will ruin you. They do strangely misshape religion, considering in how great part it consists in *trusting God* and living a life of faith, that frame to themselves a religion made up of distrusts, doubts, and fears.

You should *dread to alienate yourselves from him*, which,—as

sacrilege is one of the most detestable of all sins, a robbing of God,—is the most detestable sacrilege. You are to reserve yourselves entirely for him. "Every one that is godly he hath set apart for himself."[1]

Yea, and you are not only to reserve, but to your uttermost, to *improve and better yourselves for him daily;* to aspire to an excellency in some measure suitable to your relation; "to walk worthy of God, who hath called you to his kingdom and glory,"[2] remembering you are here to glorify him, and hereafter to be glorified with him.

And who is there of us that finds not himself under sufficient obligation, "by the mercies of God," unto all this? or to whom he may not say, in a far more eminent sense than the apostle speaks it to Philemon, "Thou owest even thyself also unto me?" Will we refuse to give God what we owe? or can we think it fit in itself '*we* should be no otherwise his than,' as one well says, 'fields, woods, and mountains, and brute beasts?' And I may add, can it be comfortable to us, he should have no other interest in us than he hath in devils? Is there no difference in the case of reasonable creatures and unreasonable? theirs who profess devotedness to him, and theirs who are his professed enemies? The one sort, through *natural incapacity,* cannot by consent be his; and the other, through an *invincible malignity,* never will. Are there no mercies conferred or offered, that do peculiarly oblige us more? Let us be more frequent and serious in recounting our mercies, and set ourselves on purpose to enter into the memory of God's great goodness; that we may thence, from time to time, urge upon ourselves this great and comprehensive duty.

And at this time, being here together on purpose, let us consider and reflect afresh upon that eminent mercy which you are wont to commemorate in the yearly return of this day.

And that I may more particularly direct my speech the same way that the voice of that memorable providence is

[1] Ps. iv. 3. [2] 1 Thess. ii. 12.

especially directed; you are, my lord, to be more peculiarly besought, by the mercies of God, that you would this day dedicate yourself to him.

I do therefore beseech you, by the many endearing mercies which God hath so plentifully conferred upon you; by the mercies of your noble extraction and birth; by the mercies of your very ingenuous and pious education; by the mercies of your family, which God hath made to descend to you from your honourable progenitors,—which, as they are capable of being improved, may be very valuable mercies; by the blood and tender mercies of your blessed and glorious Redeemer, who offered up himself a sacrifice to God for you,—that you would now present yourself to God a holy, living sacrifice, which is your reasonable service: I add,—by the signal mercy which hath made this a memorable day to you, and by which you come thus long to enjoy the advantages of all your other mercies. How came it to pass that this day comes not to be remembered by your noble relatives as a black and a gloomy day, the day of the extinction of the present light and lustre of your family, and of "quenching their coal which was left?" You had a great Preserver, who, we hope, delivered you because he delighted in you. Your life was precious in his sight. Your breath was in his hand; he preserved and renewed it to you, when you were ready to breathe your last. And we hope he will vouchsafe you that greater deliverance, not to let you fall under the charge which was once exhibited against a great man, "The God in whose hand thy breath is.....hast thou not glorified;"[1] and make you rather capable of adopting those words, "Yet the Lord will command his loving-kindness in the daytime, and in the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life."[2] Your acknowledgments are not to be *limited* to one day in the year; but from day to day his loving-kindness, and your prayer and praise, are to compose your *νυχθήμερον*,—the one to show you, the other to be unto you, your morning and evening exercise. Let this be your resolution: "Every day

[1] Dan. v. 23. [2] Ps. xlii. 8.

will I bless thee; and I will praise thy name for ever and ever;"[1] or that, "I will sing unto the Lord as long as I live: I will sing praise unto my God while I have my being."[2]

Yet your more solemn acknowledgments are justly pitched upon this day. God hath noted it for you, and made it a great day in your time. You have now enjoyed a 'septennium,' 'seven years' of mercies. And we all hope you will enjoy many more; which may all be called the posterity of that day's mercy. It was the parent of them all; so pregnant and productive a mercy was that of this day. You do owe it to the mercy of this day that you have yet a life to devote to the great Lord of heaven and earth, and to employ in the world for him: and would you think of any less noble sacrifice?

Æschines the philosopher, out of his admiration of Socrates, when divers presented him with other gifts, made a tender to him of himself. Less was thought an insufficient acknowledgment of the worth and favours of a man; can anything less be thought worthy of a God?

I doubt not you intend, my lord, a life of service to the God of your life. You would not, I presume, design to serve him under any other notion than as his. By dedicating yourself to him, you become so in the peculiar sense. It is our part in the covenant which must be between God and us. "I entered into covenant with thee, and thou becamest mine."[3] This is the ground of a settled relation which we are to bear towards him, as his servants. It is possible I may do an occasional service for one whose servant I am not; but it were mean that a great person should only be served by the servants of another lord. To be served but precariously, and as it were upon courtesy only, true greatness would disdain; as if his quality did not admit to have servants of his own.

Nor can it be thought a serious Christian, in howsoever dignifying circumstances, should reckon himself too great to

[1] Ps. cxlv. 2. [2] Ps. civ. 33. [3] Ezek. xvi. 8.

be his servant, when even a heathen[1] pronounces, 'Deo servire est regnare,'—'to serve God is to reign.' A religious nobleman of France,[2] whose affection I commend more than this external expression of it, tells us he made a deed of gift of himself to God, signing it with his own blood. He was much a greater man that so often speaks in that style, 'Thy servant,' that it is plain he took pleasure in it, and counted it his highest glory: "Stablish thy word unto thy servant, who is devoted to thy fear."[3] "Thy servant, thy servant, O Lord, the son of thine handmaid;" (alluding to the law by which the children of bond-servants were servants by birth;) "thou hast broken my bonds;"[4]—as much as to say, 'hast released me from worse bonds, that I might not only be patient, but glad to be under thine.'

Nor was he a mean prince[5] in his time, who at length abandoning the pleasures and splendour of his own court, (whereof many like examples might be given,) retired and assumed the name of 'Christodulus,'—'a servant of Christ;' accounting the glory of that name did outshine, not only that of his other illustrious titles, but of the imperial diadem too. There are very few in the world whom the too common atheism can give temptation unto to think religion an ignominy, and to count it a reproach to be the devoted servant of the most high God, but have it at hand to answer themselves, even by human (not to speak of the higher angelical) instances, that he hath been served by greater than we.

You are, my lord, shortly to enter upon the more public stage of the world. You will enter with great advantages of hereditary honour, fortune, friends; with the greater advantage of, I hope, a well-cultivated mind, and what is yet greater, of a piously-inclined heart. But you will also enter with disadvantages too. It is a slippery stage; it is a divided time, wherein there is interest against interest,

[1] Seneca. [2] Monsieur de Renty. [3] Ps. cxix. 38. [4] Ps. cxvi. 16.
[5] Cantacuzenus, whose life also, among many other remarkable things, was once strangely preserved in the fall of his horse.

party against party. To have seriously and with a pious obstinacy dedicated yourself to God, will both direct and fortify you.

I know no party in which nothing is amiss. Nor will that measure let you think it advisable to be of any, further than to unite with what there is of real, true goodness among them all. Neither is there any surer rule or measure for your direction than this: To take the course and way which is most agreeable to a state of devotedness to God. Reduce all things else hither. Wheresoever you believe in your conscience there is a sincere design for the interest and glory of God, the honour or safety of your prince, the real good and welfare of your country, there you are to fall in and adhere. And the *first of these* comprehends the *rest*. You will not be the less inclined, but much the more, to give "Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's," for your "giving to God the things that are God's." And that is, as hath been said, principally and in the first place yourself; and then all that is yours, to be used according to his holy rules, and for him whose you are.

And what can be to you the ground of a higher fortitude? Can they be unsafe that have devoted themselves to God? Dedicate yourself, and you become a sanctuary as well as a sacrifice, inviolably safe in what part and in what respects it is considerable to be so. And who can think themselves unsafe, being, with persevering fidelity, sacred to God; that understand who he is, and consider his power and dominion over both worlds, the present and that which is to come, so as that he can punish and reward in both, as men prove false or faithful to him? The triumphs of wickedness are short in this world. In how glorious triumphs will religion and devotedness to God end in the other!

TWO SERMONS

PREACHED AT THURLOW, IN SUFFOLK,

ON THOSE WORDS,

ROM. vi. 13, "YIELD YOURSELVES UNTO GOD."

TO THE MUCH HONOURED

BARTHOLOMEW SOAME, ESQ., OF THURLOW,

AND

SUSANNA, HIS PIOUS CONSORT.

My worthy Friends,

I have at length yielded to your importunity; and do here offer these sermons to public view, and your own, which were one day the last summer preached under your roof; attributing more to your pious design herein than to my own reasons against it. I no further insist upon the incongruity,—having divers years ago published a small treatise of Self-dedication,—now again to send abroad another on the same subject. For the way of tractation is here very different; this may fall into the hands of divers who have never seen the other: and, however, they who have read the other, have it in their choice whether they will trouble themselves with this or no. And though your purpose which you urged me with, of lodging one of these little books in each family of the hearers, might have been answered by so disposing of many a better book already extant; yet you having told me how greatly you observed them to be moved by these plain discourses,—considering the peculiar advantage of reading what had been with some acceptance and relish heard before, through that greater vigour that accompanies the ordinance of preaching to an assembly, than doth usually the solitary first reading of the same thing,—I was not willing to run the hazard of incurring a guilt by refusing a thing so much desired, and which, through God's blessing, might contribute something, though in never so low a degree, to the saving of men's souls. I could not indeed, as I told you, undertake to recollect everything that was spoken, according to that latitude and freedom of expression wherewith it was fit to inculcate momentous things to a plain country auditory. But I have omitted nothing I could call to mind; being little concerned that the more curious may take

notice, with dislike, how much in a work of this kind I prefer plainness, though they may call it rudeness, of speech, before that which goes for wisdom of words, or the most laboured periods.

May you find an abundant blessing on your household, for the sake of the ark which you have so piously and kindly received. And whereas, by your means, the parts about you have a help for the spreading the knowledge of God among them, added to what they otherwise more statedly enjoy; may the blessing of heaven succeed all sincere endeavours of both sorts, to the more general introducing of the new man, which is renewed in knowledge,—*where there is neither Jew nor Greek, circumcision nor uncircumcision, but Christ is all and in all:* to whose grace you are, with sincere affection, and great sense of your kindness, earnestly recommended by

Your much obliged,

Faithful Servant in Christ,

JOHN HOWE.

TWO SERMONS.

SERMON I.

ROMANS vi. 13.

"YIELD YOURSELVES UNTO GOD."

THESE are but a few words, but I can speak to you of no greater or more important thing than I am to press upon you from them this day. We are above taught how absurd it is to continue in sin, whereto we are avowedly dead,[1]—as is signified by our baptism, together with our entrance into a new state of life; and that in both we are to be conformed unto the death and resurrection of Christ;[2] so that sin ought now no more to have a new dominion over us, than death can again have over him.[3] We are therefore exhorted so to account of ourselves and of our present state, that we are "dead unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord;" and thereupon never more to let sin govern us or reign over us, or yield to it.[4]

But what then? How are we otherwise to dispose of ourselves? If we may not yield ourselves to the service of sin, what are we then to do with ourselves? The text tells us, and the very reason of the thing shows it: "But yield yourselves unto God," etc. The subject to be discoursed of is an express precept, charging it upon us all, as our unquestionable duty, to yield ourselves to God; which therefore it can only be our business, in speaking to this text, to explain and apply:—

[1] Rom. vi. 1, 2. [2] Verses 3—5. [3] Verses 6—10. [4] Verses 11—13, former part.

First, we are to explain it. Whosoever shall charge upon others such a duty,—not obvious perhaps at the first view, in the full extent of it, to every one's understanding,—may well expect to be asked, 'But what do you mean by this precept; or what doth this yielding ourselves to God signify?' And here are two things to be opened to you: I. How or under what notions we are to consider God and ourselves in this matter; II. What our yielding ourselves to him, so considered, must include.

I. *How we are to consider or look upon God in this affair?* You are to consider him both as he is in himself, and according to the relations he bears to you; whether before your yielding yourselves to him, or in and upon your so doing:—

1. *As he is in himself.* You that have heard, or now read what I have said and do write, here make a stand, and bethink yourselves a while. What! are you about yielding yourselves to God? Sure you ought to be thinking of it as soon as you hear his claim laid to you.

But do you now know with whom you have to do? Too many have the name of God, that great and awful name, in their mouth or ear, and have no correspondent thought in their mind; it passes with them as a transient sound, as soon over as another common word of no greater length, and leaves no impression. Perhaps there is less in their minds to answer it than most other words which men use in common discourse. For they have usually distinct thoughts of the things they speak of; otherwise they would neither understand one another nor themselves, but might speak of a horse and mean a sheep, or be thought to mean so. And it would no more move a man or impress his mind, to hear or mention a jest than a matter of life and death. But the holy and reverend name of God is often so slightly mentioned, as in common oaths, or in idle talk is so merely taken in vain, that if they were on the sudden stopped, and asked what they thought on or had in their mind when they mentioned that word, and were to make a true answer, they cannot say they thought of anything; as if the name of God, the ALL, were the name of

nothing! Otherwise, had they thought what that great name signifies, either they had not mentioned it, or the mention of it had struck their hearts, and even overwhelmed their very souls! I could tell you what awe and observance hath been wont to be expressed in reference to that sacred name among a people that were called by it; and surely the very sound of that name ought ever to shake all the powers of our souls and presently form them to reverence and adoration. Shall we think it fit to play or trifle with it, as is the common wont? My friends, shall we *now* do so, when we are called upon to yield ourselves to God? Labour to hear and think and act intelligently, and as those that have the understandings of men. And now especially in this solemn transaction, endeavour to render God great to yourselves: enlarge your minds, that as far as is possible and needful, they may take in the entire notion of him. As to what he is in himself, you must conceive of him as "a spirit,"[1] as his own word, which can best tell us what he is, instructs us; and so, as a being of far higher excellency than anything you can see with your eyes or touch with your hands, or than can come under the notice of any of your senses. You may easily apprehend *spiritual being* to be the source and spring of life and self-moving power. This world were all a dead unmoving lump, if there were no such thing as *spirit;* as your bodies when the soul is fled. You must conceive him to be an *eternal, self-subsisting spirit,* not sprung up into being from another, as our souls are; but who, from the excellency of his own being, was necessarily of and from himself; comprehending originally and eternally in himself the fulness of all life and being. I would fain lead you here, as by the hand, a few plain and easy steps. You are sure that somewhat now is,—of this you can be in no doubt; and next, you may be as sure that somewhat hath of itself ever been: for if nothing at all now were, you can easily apprehend it impossible that anything should ever be, or of itself now begin to be, and spring up out of nothing. Do but make this supposition in

[1] John iv. 24.

your own minds, and the matter will be as plain to you as anything can be, that if nothing at all were now in being, nothing could ever come into being; wherefore you may be sure that because there is somewhat now in being, there must have been somewhat or other always in being, that was eternally of itself. And then, to go a little farther, since you know there are many things in being that were not of themselves, you may be sure that what was always of itself had in it a sufficiency of active power to produce other things; otherwise nothing that is not of itself could ever be: as you know that we were not of ourselves; and the case is the same as to whatsoever else our eyes behold.

You must conceive of God, therefore, as comprehending originally in his own being,—which is most peculiar to himself,—a power to produce all whatsoever being, excellency, and perfection, is to be found in all the whole creation; for there can be nothing which either is not or arises not from what was of itself: and therefore that he is an absolutely, universally, and infinitely perfect Being; and therefore that life, knowledge, wisdom, power, goodness, holiness, justice, truth, and whatsoever other conceivable excellencies, do all in highest perfection belong, as necessary attributes, unchangeably and without possibility of diminution, unto him; and all which, his own word, agreeably to the plain reason of things, doth in multitudes of places ascribe to him,—as you that are acquainted with the Bible cannot but know. You must therefore conceive of him as the All in all. So great, so excellent, so glorious a One he is, to whom you are to surrender and yield yourselves!

You are to conceive of him as most essentially *One;* for there can be but one *All.* And so his word teaches you to conceive: "Hear, O Israel; the Lord our God is one Lord."[1] "We know there is none other God but one," etc.[2] Your thoughts, therefore, need not be divided within you, nor your minds hang in doubt, to whom you are to betake and yield yourselves: there is no place or pretence for halting between

[1] Deut. vi. 4. [2] 1 Cor. viii. 4—6.

two opinions. He most righteously lays the sole claim to you; —"a just God, and a Saviour," and "there is none besides him,"[1] and so we are told often in that and the foregoing chapters. He whose far-discerning eye projects its beams every way, and ranges through all infinity, says he knows not any.[2]

Yet again, you are to conceive of him as *Three in One*, and *that* in your yielding yourselves to him; as the prescribed form, when this surrender is to be made in baptism, directs; which runs thus: "In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost."[3] You are not to be curious in your inquiries beyond what is written in this matter, how far the subsistents in the Godhead are three, and in what sense one. They cannot be both in the same sense. But there is latitude enough to conceive how they may be distinct from each other, and yet agree in one nature; which in none of them depending upon will and pleasure, sets each of them infinitely above all created being, which for Divine pleasure only was and is created.[4] And that we so far conceive of them as three, as to apprehend some things spoken of one that are not to be affirmed of another of them, is so plain, of so great consequence, and the whole frame of practical religion so much depends thereon, and even this transaction of yielding up ourselves,—which must be introductive and fundamental to all the rest,—that it is by no means to be neglected in our daily course, and least of all in this solemn business, as will more appear anon. In the meantime, set this ever-blessed, glorious God, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, before your eyes, as to whom, thus in himself considered, you are now to yield yourselves.

2. You must conceive of him *according to the relations which he bears towards you*, partly before your yielding yourselves to him, and partly in and upon your doing it. That is,—

Before you do any such thing, you must conceive of him as,—

(1.) Your *Creator*, the *Author of your being*, "of whom,

[1] Isa. xlv. 21. [2] Isa. xliv. 8. [3] Matt. xxviii. 19. [4] Rev. iv. 11.

and through whom, and to whom, are all things."[1] He that made you demands you for himself. You are required to yield yourselves to him that gave you breath.

(2.) As the continual *Sustainer of your being*, and who renews your life unto you every moment; in whom "you live, and move, and have your being"[2] continually; so that if he should withdraw his supports, you immediately drop into nothing. But these are things common to you with all other creatures; and signify, therefore, his antecedent right in you before you have yielded yourselves, upon which you ought to do it, and cannot without great injustice to him decline doing it.

There are other considerations also you ought to entertain concerning him in this your yielding yourselves to him;—namely, of some things which are partly, and in some sense, before it, and which it supposes; but which partly also, and in a more special sense, would follow and be inferred by it. Principally, this fourfold consideration you should have of him in your yielding yourselves to him, namely, as your *Owner*, your *Teacher*, your *Ruler*, and your *Benefactor;* and all these with the addition of *Supreme*, it being impossible he should have a superior, or that there should be any one above him in any of these. And he is in some sense all these to you before you can have yielded yourselves, as may in great part be collected from what hath been already said; but when you yield yourselves to him, he will be all these to you in a far higher, nobler, and more excellent sense; and you are to yield yourselves to him as such, or that in your so doing he may actually become such to you.

i. As your *Owner;*—the God whose you are, as the apostle speaks,[3] and whom, as it there follows, and is naturally consequent, you are to serve. You were his by a former right, as all things,—being made by him,—are. But you are to yield yourselves to him that you may be more peculiarly his, in a sense more excellent in itself and more comfortable to you; "If ye will obey, ye shall be a peculiar

[1] Rom. xi. 36. [2] Acts xvii. 28. [3] Acts xxvii. 23.

treasure unto me above all people; for all the earth is mine."[1] Of such as fear him, the great God says, "They shall be mine in that day when I make up my jewels."[2] Your yielding yourselves adds nothing to his right in you,—you therein only recognise and acknowledge the right he had in you before; but it adds to you a capacity and qualification, both by the tenor of his gospel-covenant and in the nature of the thing, for such nobler uses as otherwise you cannot serve for: as the more contemptible lumber about a man's house may be as truly his as the most precious things; but neither doth he intend, nor can such meaner things admit, to be the ornaments either of his person or his house. The great God intends his devoted, peculiar people to be to him a "crown and royal diadem,"[3] when he "puts away the wicked of the earth like dross."[4] "In a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth;"[5] but it is only the purged and sanctified soul—which is also a self-devoted one—that shall be the "vessel unto honour, being made meet for the Master's use, and prepared to every good work."[6] Persons and things acquire a sacredness by being devoted to God. Persons especially, that can and do devote themselves, are highly ennobled by it; he hereupon, besides their relative holiness, really more and more sanctifies and frames them for his own more immediate service and communion. Of such a people he tells us, that he hath formed them for himself, and they shall praise him; and to them he saith,—intending it manifestly in the more eminent sense,—"Thou art mine."[7] Such may with a modest and humble, but with a just confidence, freely say, "I am thine, save me."[8] In yielding yourselves, consider therefore first, that he is your Owner by an unquestionable former right, and let that effectually move you to do it with all your hearts. For will you not give him his own? When you account duty to your prince obliges you to give to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, will you not give God the things that are God's? and will

[1] As Exod. xix. 5. [2] Mal. iii. 17. [3] Isa. lxii. 3. [4] Ps. cxix. 119.
[5] 2 Tim. ii. 20. [6] Verse 21. [7] Isa. xliii. 1, 7, 21. [8] Ps. cxix. 94.

you not know him for your owner? "The ox knoweth his owner."[1] Or will it satisfy you to be in no other kind his than brutes and devils are, that either through an incapacity of nature cannot acknowledge him, or through a malignity of nature will not? Oh, yield yourselves, with humble desire and expectation that he will vouchsafe *otherwise* to own you!

ii. As your *Teacher*. So indeed he also is to all men, though they never yield themselves to him. "He that teacheth man knowledge, shall not he know?"[2] "There is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding." Yea, and inferior creatures, as they all owe their natures and peculiar instincts to him, may be said to have him for their teacher too. But will it content you to be so only taught by him? There is another sort of teaching which, if you yield yourselves to him as your great instructor, he will vouchsafe unto you. The things you know not, and which it is necessary you should know, he will teach you: that is, such things as are of real necessity to your true and final welfare,—not which only serve to please your fancy or gratify your curiosity; for his teaching respects an appointed, certain end, suitable to his wisdom and mercy, and to the calamity and danger of your state. The teaching requisite for perishing sinners was, what they might "do to be saved." And when we have cast about in our thoughts never so much, we have no way to take but to yield ourselves to God, who will then be our most undeceiving guide. To whom it belongs to save us at last, to him only it can belong to lead us in the way to that blessed end.

Many anxious inquiries and fervent disputes there have been, how one may be infallibly assured of the way to be saved. They are to be excused who think it not fit, but upon very plain grounds, to venture so great a concernment or to run so great a hazard, in a mere compliment to any man or party of men. Confident expressions, as 'My soul for yours,' and such like, signify nothing with a cautious, considering man, except that such as use them care as little for his soul

[1] Isa. i. 3. [2] Ps. xciv. 10.

as their own. The papal infallibility some would have us trust to at a venture, and would make us think it rudeness to doubt it,—when nobody stands upon good manners in endeavouring to escape a ruin; when a great part of their own communion trust not to it,[1] and some of them have written strongly against it![2] The accurate stating and discussing of the controversy, how far or in what sense any such thing as infallible light may belong to the Christian church, are not fit for this place nor for a discourse of this nature. It is enough now to say, that this claim hereof to the pope or bishop of Rome as such, cannot be proved; may be plainly disproved.

It cannot be proved: for since no principles of common reason are pretended sufficient to prove it of any man, or of him more than another, it must be proved by supernatural revelation, if at all. But in the written word of God there is no such thing. Pretences from thence are too vain to be refuted or mentioned. And if any other revelation should be pretended, it will be a new and as impossible a task to prove the *divinity* of that revelation, so as to infer upon the world an obligation to believe it. Nor is it necessary to insist upon this, because *it may be plainly disproved;* for the same thing cannot be both true and false. And it sufficiently disproves such a man's infallibility, or the impossibility of his erring, that it can be evidently proved he *hath* erred:—as when he hath determined against the express word of Christ, forbidding them (to take one or two instances among many) to drink of the eucharistical cup, whom He hath commanded to drink of it; or (to mention a more important one) when believers in Christ, or lovers of him, are pronounced damned, who He hath said shall not perish, but have everlasting life and the crown of righteousness; or when, on the other hand, pardon of sin and eternal life are pretended to be given to such whom the evangelical law condemns to death:—when one to whom this privilege hath been asserted to belong, hath determined against another to whom upon the same

[1] The Gallican Church. [2] Du Pin, etc.

grounds it must equally belong; as it is well known in the Christian church that pope might be alleged against pope, and one papal constitution against another; not to insist on what might be shown out of their own history, that the same pope hath, being so, changed his judgment in point of doctrine, and left us to divine when he was the fallible and when the infallible pope:—and again, when there have been determinations against the common uncorrupted senses of mankind; as that what their sight, and touch, and taste assures them is bread, is said to be the flesh of a human body; for if you cannot be sure of what both your own and the sound senses of any other man would tell you, you can be sure of nothing at all: you cannot be sure you see one another, or hear me speaking to you; nor be sure when you heard the transforming words, "This is my body;" or much less that they were ever spoken, if you heard them not; or that that was bread, and not a stone or a piece of clay, that is pretended to be transubstantiated by them. The foundation of all certainty were upon these terms taken away from among men upon earth; and upon the same common grounds upon which it is pretended you ought to believe that which is shown or offered to you to be the flesh of a man, and not bread any longer, you must believe or judge the quite contrary,—that it is bread still, and not flesh, and consequently that he is far from being infallible, but doth actually err, upon whose authority you are directed to believe otherwise.

And, indeed, the claimed infallibility is by this sufficiently disproved, that *there is no imaginable way of proving it.* For if there were any such thing, it must be by God's own immediate gift and vouchsafement: how otherwise should a man be made infallible? And if so, it must be for an end worthy of a wise and merciful God; whereupon for the same reason for which he should have made such a man infallible, he should have made it infallibly certain to other men that he hath made him so: whereas there is no one point wherein his infallible determination can be pretended to be necessary, against which there is more to be said than against the pre-

tence itself of his infallibility ; nor *for* which less is to be said than can, with any colour, or without highest and most just contempt, be said for *it*. The most weighty thing that I have known alleged is, the great expediency of an infallible judge. But if we will think *that* a good way of arguing, that things are in fact so or so, because we can fancy it would be better if they were ; we may as well prove that all mankind are sincere Christians, or there is no sin in the world nor ever was, and a thousand things besides in the natural world that never were or will be, because it appears to us it would be for the better. So much is the foolishness of man wiser than God.

Besides that, *sanctity* must be judged as necessary to the final salvation and felicity of the souls of men as *orthodoxy*, or exemption from doctrinal error, by all with whom either Christian religion or common reason signifies anything. For the same reason, therefore, for which it can be thought necessary God should have put it into the power of any man to make others not err, He should have put it equally into his power to make them holy, to renew and change their hearts and lives. But what man hath this power ? And one would reasonably expect, if either were, that both powers should be lodged in the same man ; which if *they* should pretend who assert the *other* unto one man, their own histories might make them blush ; unless they can think it more probable that he can and will effectually sanctify another, and make him holy, who is himself most infamously impure and unholy, than that he can secure another from erring in matters of doctrine, who cannot secure himself. But then it may be said, 'If such sure light and guidance is not to be found or had from one man, it must be from some community or body of men in the Christian church ; for can it be thought God should have taken care to settle a religion in the world on purpose for the saving of men's souls, that yet affords no man any certainty of being saved by it ?'

I answer, Yes, there is a certain, undeceiving light afforded by it to the whole body of sincere Christians, sufficient, and

intended not to gratify a vain humour, but to save their souls; and which you can only, and may confidently, expect by yielding yourselves to God as your teacher. As it cannot agree with the absolute perfection of his nature to be himself deceived in anything, it can, you may be sure, as little agree with it to deceive you, or let you mistake your way, in the things wherein he hath encouraged and induced you to commit and entrust yourselves to his conduct and guidance. Will he let a soul wander and be lost, that hath entirely given up itself to be led and taught by him? His word hath at once expressed to you his nature, and his good-will towards you in this case: "Good and upright is the Lord; therefore will he teach sinners in the way."[1] But what sinners? The next words tell you: "The meek" (self-resigned ones, humble, teachable learners,) "will he guide in judgment,"—or *with* judgment, as that particle admits to be read; he will guide them judiciously and surely, so that your hearts need not misgive, or suspect, or doubt to follow;—"and the meek will he teach his way."[2] Who would not wish and be glad to have such a teacher? "You shall know," (how express is his word!) "if you follow on to know the Lord;" for "his going forth is prepared as the morning."[3] You do not need to devise in the morning how to create your own light,—it is prepared and ready for you. The sun was made before you were, and it keeps its course; and so constantly will God's own light shine to you without your contrivance, or care for anything but to seek, receive it, and be guided by it. Know your advantage in having such a teacher:—

First, He will teach you *inwardly;* even your very hearts, and so as his instructions shall reach the centre, the inmost of your spirits: "God, that made light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts," etc.[4] And when that holy, good man had been solacing himself with highest pleasure in considering this, that God was his portion,—so contentful and satisfying a one that he cannot forbear saying, "The lines are fallen to me in pleasant places, and I have a goodly

[1] Ps. xxv. 8. [2] Verse 9. [3] Hos. vi. 3. [4] 2 Cor. iv. 6.

heritage,"[1]—he presently adds, "I will bless the Lord, who hath given me counsel;" (as much as to say, 'I should never else have thought of such a thing; it had never come into my mind to think of choosing God for my portion; I should have done like the rest of the vain world, have followed shadows all my days;') "my reins also instruct me in the night-seasons."[2] He will so teach you as to make you teach yourselves;—put an abiding word into you, that shall talk with you when you sit in your houses, and walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise up, and whereby you shall be enabled to commune with your own hearts upon your beds while others sleep; and revolve, or roll over in your minds, dictates of life. You will not need to say, "Who shall ascend into heaven, to bring down Christ from above? or, Who shall descend into the deep, to bring Christ again from the dead? for the word will be nigh thee, not in thy mouth only, but in thine heart."[3] You will have in you an "ingrafted word;"[4] and the law of your God will be in your heart, so as none of your steps shall slide.[5] This is our Lord's own interpretation of divers words of the prophets, that,—in the days of the more general diffusion of holy, vital light, which was to be after his own appearance in the world,—"they shall be all taught of God;"[6] that is, so as to have their hearts inclined towards himself, and drawn to him, as the reference of these words to those of the foregoing verse shows: Wherein,—

Secondly, Lies your further advantage; that by him you shall be taught *effectually*. Other teaching doth but reach the ear, or only at the most beget some faint notions in the mind, that you are little the better for; his shall produce real fruit. He is the Lord your God, who teaches you to profit; and who by gentle and unforcible, but by most prevailing insinuations, shall slide in upon your spirits, win them by light and love, and allure them to a compliance with what shall be in the end safe and happy for yourselves. He will instruct

[1] Ps. xvi. 5, 6. [2] Verse 7. [3] Deut. xxx. 11, 12, etc.; Rom. x. 6—8. [4] James i. 21. [5] Ps. xxxvii. 31. [6] John vi. 45.

you, though not with a violent, yet with a strong hand, so as not to lose his kind design. Others teach you, and leave you what they found you;—convinced, perhaps, but not changed; unable to resist any ill inclination, or your disinclination to that which was good. Power will accompany his teaching; a conquering power, that will secretly constrain and captivate your hearts. And how pleasant a victory will that be to yourselves! Oh, the peace and joy you will find springing up within you, when once you feel yourselves overcome! The most that a man can say to you is what the prophet Samuel once said, so great and so good a man, "God forbid I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you; but I will teach you the good and the right way."[1] He could only show that way, and pray that God would do the rest; which implies God only can so teach it you as to make you walk in it.

I am not persuading you to slight human teaching; you will need it; and it is among the gifts which your glorious Redeemer, being ascended on high,[2] hath given to men; namely, pastors and teachers:[3] but understand their teaching to be only subordinate and ministerial. *Without* or *against* God, you are to call no man master or teacher upon earth. And thus far their teaching is to be regarded, as it *agrees*, first with what God doth inwardly teach you, by that common *light which shines in every man's own bosom*, that with a sincere mind attends to it, and which is too little attended to. There are truths,—too commonly held in unrighteousness,—seated generally in the minds and consciences of men; by which, though they have not another law, "they are a law unto themselves,"[4] and for the stifling and resisting whereof "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against them."[5] From such truths they might infer others, and, where God affords external helps, come to discern a sure ground whereupon to understand that what is contained besides in the frame of Christian doctrine is true; being enabled to judge of

[1] 1 Sam. xii. 23. [2] Ps. lxviii. 18. [3] Eph. iv. 11. [4] Rom. ii. 14. [5] Rom. i. 18.

the evidences that prove the whole revelation thereof to be from God; and nothing being in itself more evident than that what he hath revealed is true. And withal God is graciously pleased to shine into minds that with upright aims set themselves to inquire out and understand his mind; and so further light comes to be superadded to that which is common. Now take heed how you neglect what a man teaches you agreeably to that inward light which is already, one way or other, in your own minds and consciences. Hither in some part, and in great part, we are to appeal in our teaching you. So the more early Christian teachers did. "Not handling," say they, "the word of God deceitfully; but, by manifestation of the truth, commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God."[1] In the most deeply fundamental things that concern your practice every day, we may appeal to yourselves, and your own consciences. If we say to you, 'Ought you not to live according to His will that gave you breath? should you not above all things fear and love and trust and obey Him that made you and all things? should you not do as you would be done unto? should you not take more care for your immortal souls than for your mortal flesh?'—you must every one say, 'I believe in mine own conscience this is so.' If I appeal to you in the very thing I am speaking of, 'Should you not yield yourselves to God, whose creatures you are?'—I doubt not you will any of you say, 'I think in my very conscience I should.' We have you witnesses against yourselves, if you will not hear us in such things. And again, it being a matter very capable of plain proof that those writings, which we call the Holy Scriptures, were from God, our teaching ought so far to be regarded by you as, secondly, we can manifest to you that it *agrees with the Scriptures*. And we are sure he will never teach you inwardly against what he hath there taught. Will the God of truth say and unsay the same thing? That were to overthrow the design of all his instructions, and to subvert the authority which he requires men to reverence.

[1] 2 Cor. iv. 2.

No *man* could expect to be regarded on such terms. And by this rule freely examine all that we teach you; as our Saviour directed the Jews to do;[1] and for the doing whereof the apostle commended the Berean Christians.[2] And we have here the same advantage at length, though not immediately, upon your consciences; which cannot but judge that whatsoever is found in that word which you confess to be Divine must be most certainly true.

And if *within such limits* you take the help of men for your instruction, having yielded yourselves to God as your supreme and highest teacher, you are upon safe terms. Only be sincere in listening to his dictates, whether internal or external. Let not a prepossessed heart or vicious inclination be their interpreter. "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God," etc.[3]

iii. You must consider God, in your yielding yourselves, as your *sovereign Ruler*. "For to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey."[4] Though teaching and ruling may be diversely conceived of, they cannot be separate in this case. The nobler and final part of God's teaching you, is teaching you your duty; what you are to practise and do. And so when he teaches you, he commands you too, and leaves it not arbitrary to you whether you will be directed by him or no. What is his by former right, and by after-consent and self-resignation, shall it not be governed by him, if it be a subject capable of laws and government, as such consent shows it to be? Your yielding yourselves to God is not a homage, but a mockery, if you do it not with a resolution to receive the law from his mouth: and that whereinsoever he commands, you will to your uttermost obey. But in this and the other things that follow, my limits constrain me unto more brevity. Only let not this apprehension of God be frightful; yea, let it be amiable to you, as in itself it is, and cannot but be to you, if you consider the loveliness of his government, the kind design of it, and how suitable it is to the kindest

[1] John v. 39. [2] Acts xvii. 11. [3] John vii. 17. [4] Rom. vi. 16.

design; that it is a government first and principally over minds, purposely intended to reduce them to a holy and peaceful order; wherein it cannot but continue them, when *that* kingdom comes to be settled there which stands in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, and all the laws whereof are summed up in love; being such also as in the keeping whereof there is great reward.

iv. You are to consider him,—and accordingly to yield yourself,—as your *greatest Benefactor*, or rather, as your *best and supreme Good*. Indeed, you cannot sever his being your Ruler from his being your Benefactor, more than his being your Teacher from his being your Ruler, when the tendency and design of his government are understood. For it is a very principal part of our felicity to be under his government; and he doth you the greatest good by ruling you, when, otherwise, nothing is more evident than that you would run yourselves into the greatest of evil, and soon be most miserable creatures. You are now so far happy as you are subject to his government; and that which it aims at is to make you finally and completely happy. For it is the design of his government, not only to regulate your actions, but your inclinations, and principally towards himself. You have been "alienated from the life of God;"[1] were become "strangers to him," yea, and "enemies in your very minds:"[2] for "the carnal mind is enmity against God."[3] The very business of his government is in the first place to alter the temper of your minds; for, continuing carnal, they neither are subject to the law of God nor can be, as the same place tells you. Therefore if his government take place in you, and you become subject, you become spiritual; the "law of the Spirit of life" having now the possession and the power of you. Nor was it possible he should ever be an effectual Benefactor to you, without being thus an overpowering Ruler; so do these things run into one another. To let you have your own will, and follow your carnal inclination, and cherish and favour you in this course, were

[1] Eph. iv. 18. [2] Col. i. 21 [3] Rom. viii. 7.

to gratify you to your ruin, and concur with you to your being for ever miserable; which you may see plainly, if you will understand wherein your true felicity and blessedness must consist, or consider what was intimated concerning it in the proposal of this head,—that he is to be your Benefactor, in being to you himself your supreme and only satisfying Good. He never doth you good effectually and to purpose, till he overcome your carnal inclination. For while that remains, will you ever mind him? Can you love him, desire after him, or delight in him? The first and most fundamental law which he lays upon you is, that "you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and soul, and mind, and might." What will become of you if you cannot obey this law? This world will shortly be at an end, and you must, it is like, leave it sooner; you are undone, if your hearts be not beforehand so framed as that you can savour and take complacency in a better and higher Good. You will shortly have nothing left you but himself; you will be plucked away from your houses and lands and friends, and all your outward comforts; and now in what a case are you, if you can take no pleasure or satisfaction in God! You are therefore to yield up yourself to him in full union, as with your most grateful and delectable Good; with this sense possessing your soul, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee."[1]

And thus you are to look upon God in your yielding yourselves to him:—

You are to yield yourselves to his claim, as your rightful *Owner;* to his instruction, as your undeceiving *Teacher;* to his government, as your gracious, sovereign *Ruler;* and to the enjoyment of him, as your best and most satisfying *Good*, or your self-communicating Benefactor.

But it also concerns you to have distinct and right thoughts of the state of your case, and how things are between him and the sons of men, that you may duly apply yourselves to him in so great a transaction. The gospel

[1] Ps. lxxiii. 25.

under which you live tells you, he treats with men in and by a Mediator, his own Son; who came down into this wretched world of ours in great compassion to our miseries, and took our nature,—was here on earth among us as an incarnate God, God manifested in the flesh. Because we were partakers of flesh and blood, he took part with us likewise of the same; and in that nature of ours died for us, to make way that we might yield ourselves to God, and be accepted. No man now comes to the Father but by him.[1] He must be acknowledged with great reverence; and a most profound homage must be rendered to him. "He that denieth the Son, hath not the Father."[2] And it being his pleasure to treat with us by his Son, and the case requiring that we apply ourselves to him, we are to take notice of him according to those capacities wherein Scripture represents him to us. And it represents him agreeably to those same notions according to which we have shown we are to consider God the Father in this matter; so as that Christ being the Mediator between him and us, when we yield ourselves to him *ultimately* and *finally*, under the notions that have been mentioned, we are *first* to yield ourselves to his Son, Christ Jesus, our Redeemer, under the like notions. For,—

Being to yield ourselves to *God as our Owner*, we must know the Father hath given all things into the hands of the *Son*;[3] and that "he is Lord of all:"[4] which, in the first sense, signifies him to be, by the Father's constitution, the Owner of all things, even as he is the Redeemer; for he *therefore* died and rose again, that he might be Lord of the dead and living,[5]—that is, of both worlds; agreeably to what he himself speaks immediately upon his resurrection from the dead: "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth."[6]

. And for those other notions of God under which we have shown we are to yield ourselves to him, as our Teacher, Ruler, and Benefactor, they correspond to that threefold

[1] John xiv. 6. [2] 1 John ii. 23. [3] John xiii. 3.
[4] Acts x. 36. [5] Rom. xiv. 9. [6] Matt. xxviii. 18.

office of Christ, of which you cannot but have heard much, namely, of Prophet, King, and Priest: so that we are to commit ourselves to him, when we yield ourselves to God, as a *Teacher* come forth from God, and who reveals *Him* to us whom no man hath seen at any time; as one that must reign over us, and over the greatest on earth;[1] and by whom we are to be reconciled to God, and restored to the enjoyment of him.[2] And because our blind minds and perverse hearts need light and grace from above, to direct and incline us hereto, therefore hath the Spirit of the Father and the Son a great work to do in us to this purpose. Whereupon we are to yield ourselves to that blessed *Spirit* also, as our *Enlightener* and *Sanctifier:* which our being directed to "walk in the Spirit;"[3] and our being told that "they that have not the Spirit of Christ are none of his;"[4] and that "as many as are the sons of God are led by his Spirit,"[5] do plainly show.

You see, then, we are to yield ourselves to God, the *Father, Son,* and *Holy Ghost;* which also our having those great names named upon us in our baptism, as we before told you, doth import. And how necessary all this is, you will see, if we consider how we are to look upon *ourselves* in this transaction; that is,—

First, We are to consider *ourselves as God's creatures,* being, as you have heard, to consider him as our Creator; and so we must reckon we owe ourselves to him, and do but yield him what we owe, and what was his before: for how can you but be his, who of his mere pleasure hath raised you out of nothing?

Secondly, we must remember we have been *apostate creatures,* such as had fallen and revolted from him; and so our yielding ourselves to him is a giving ourselves back to him, having injuriously withdrawn and withheld ourselves from him before. And because the injury was so great as we could never make any recompense for, therefore it was

[1] Luke xix. 14, 27; Ps. ii. 6—10. [2] Rom. v. 11. [3] Gal. v. 25.
[4] Rom. viii. 9. [5] Verse 14.

necessary such a Mediator should be appointed between God and us; for whose sake only we can expect to be accepted when we yield ourselves. So great a Majesty was not to be approached by offending creatures without so great a Daysman and Peacemaker.

Thirdly, we must consider ourselves as *impure*, and every way unfit for the Divine presence, service, and converse; and who did therefore need the power of the Holy Ghost to be put forth upon us to make us fit; and that therefore our case required we should put ourselves into such hands for that purpose.

Fourthly, we are to consider ourselves as *under the gospel*,— as sinners invited and called back to God; as such whose case is not desperate, or who need to abandon ourselves to ruin, (though we have greatly offended,) as if there were no hope. We are to consider ourselves with distinction from the condition of other fallen creatures. The angels that fell, and kept not their first station, have no gospel sent to them to invite them back, and persuade them again to yield themselves to God; you have. Into what a transport should this thought put you! how should it mollify you! Oh, what a yielding temper and disposition of spirit should it work in you towards this gracious call and just challenge, which the great God now gives you, and makes unto you!

Thus far, then, you see how you are to consider God and yourselves in this your yielding yourselves to him.

SERMON II.

You are now next to consider,—

II. *What your yielding yourselves to God according to such considerations must include or be accompanied with.* For it is not reasonable to think you have no more to mind in this matter than only what is contained in the bare abstract nature of such an act; but looking upon your case in its circumstances, and considering the state of things between God and you, it greatly concerns you to see to it, that the matter be suitably carried to this state of your case. Whereupon,—

1. Your yielding yourselves to God must be accompanied with very deep and serious *repentance.* It is a most penitential surrender you are now to make of yourselves to him; for you are to remember that you are but now coming back out of a state of apostasy from your sovereign and most rightful Lord. Yea, though you are but renewing your surrender of yourselves, having done somewhat herein before, you are yet to consider this was your case; and perhaps some * of you * never have yet seriously thought of any such thing, but lived in this world hitherto as if you were your own, and there were no Lord over you. Oh, then, with what inward remorse, with what brokenness of heart, with what relentings and self-accusings, should this thing now be done! You should come, smiting upon the thigh, and saying within yourselves, 'What have I done? So long, Lord, have I lived in this world of thine, which *thou* madest, and not I, as if I might do in it, and with myself, what I pleased! I have usurped upon thy unquestionable right in me,—have lived to myself, and not to thee. I am now convinced this

was a very undutiful, unlawful way of living.' Let him hear you (as he once heard Ephraim, or shall do) bemoaning yourselves, and saying, "Turn thou me, and I shall be turned; thou art the Lord my God,"[1] etc. How can you think of yielding yourselves now at length to God, without being deeply sensible of your having deferred it so long, and that you have not done it sooner; and how great the iniquity was of your former course, that you have all this while committed a continual robbery upon him that gave you breath? "Will a man rob God?" And if you say, 'Wherein have I robbed him?' you have robbed him of yourself,—a greater thing than of tithes and offerings. And this robbery was sacrilege; for everything due and devoted to God hath a sacredness upon it. And consider, were you not, upon his just claim, in your baptism devoted to him? How should this startle you! You have constantly alienated from him a sacred thing! You have been in a continual contest with him about one of the highest rights of his sovereignty, yea, and of his Godhead; for to that nothing is more peculiar than to be Lord of all. So that the controversy between him and you hath been, Who shall be God? You have refused him his own creature. How high a crime was this! Know, then, you have been a great transgressor, a grievous revolter; and now, therefore, yield yourself to him with a melting, broken heart, or you do nothing.

2. It must be done with great *deliberation*, not as the mere effect of a sudden fright. What is done in a rash haste may be as soon undone. Leisurely consider and take the whole compass of the case; weigh with yourselves the mentioned grounds upon which you are to yield yourselves, and the ends you are to do it for, that things may be set right between him and you; that you may return into your own natural place and station; that you may be again stated in that subordination to your sovereign Lord which fitly belongs to you; that he may have his right which he claims, and you the mercy which you need. Here is place for much

[1] Jer. xxxi. 18, 19.

consideration. And when Israel is complained of as less willing to acknowledge God for his Owner and Master, than the ox and ass were to acknowledge theirs, all is resolved into this, that "the people did not consider."[1]

3. It must be done with *judgment;* which is the effect of such consideration. When all things have been well weighed that belong to this case, then let this formed judgment pass, 'Lord, I ought to be thine, and no other's.' Say to him hereupon, with a convinced judgment and conscience, 'O God, I surrender myself, as now seeing none hath that right in me that thou hast.' When the love of Christ becomes constraining upon souls, it is because they thus judge, that they ought no longer to live to themselves, but to him, etc.[2] These things last mentioned will imply a rectified mind, which must be ingredient into this transaction; else it will be defective throughout.

4. It must be done with a *fulness of consent;* and herein it chiefly consists. When the soul says, 'Lord, I am now most entirely willing to be thine;' this is your yielding yourselves. And hereby the covenant is struck between God and you; which consists in the expressed consent of the parties covenanting in the matters about which the covenant is. This covenant is about the parties themselves who covenant, as the conjugal covenant is, which resembles it,—namely, that they shall be one another's. God hath expressed his consent in his word and gospel, making therein the first overture to you. When you rejoin your own consent, the thing is done: this being the sum of his covenant, "I will be your God, and ye shall be my people;" as in many places of Scripture it is gathered up. When therefore, as God hath openly testified his willingness to be their God who shall accept and take him to be so, you also are willing, and do consent too, you do now take hold on his covenant; matters are agreed between him and you; and you may take those words as spoken to you particularly, "I have entered into covenant with thee, and thou art become mine."[3]

[1] Isa. i. 3. [2] 2 Cor. v. 14, 15. [3] Ezek. xvi. 8.

But then you must take notice that this is to be done with a *full* consent; which that is said to be which determines you, though it be not absolutely perfect. No grace in any faculty is perfect in this life. But as, in human affairs, that will is said to be *full* which is the spring of answerable following actions, so it is here. If a man have some inclination to do this or that, and do it not, it goes for nothing; if he do it, his will is said to be full, though he have some remaining disinclination. You may be said to yield yourselves to God with a full consent, when you live afterwards as one devoted to him.

5. Your yielding yourselves to God must carry *life* in it, as the following words signify: "Yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead." It must be a vital act, and have vigour in it. You must be capable of making that true judgment of your case, as it is verse 11, "of reckoning truly that you are dead to sin, but alive to God through Jesus Christ;" do it as feeling life to spring in your souls towards God in your yielding yourselves to him. What! will you offer God a carcass? not the "living sacrifice," which you see is required?[1] Beg earnestly for his own Spirit of life and power, that may enable you to offer up a living soul to the living God.

6. There must be *faith* in your yielding yourselves; for it is a committing or entrusting yourselves to God, with the expectation of being saved and made happy by him. So Scripture speaks of it: "I know whom I have believed," or trusted, "and that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day."[2] It is suitable to the gracious nature of God, to his excellent greatness, to his design, to the mediatorship of his Son, to his promise and gospel-covenant, and to your own necessities, and the exigency of your own lost, undone state, that you so yield yourselves to him, as a poor creature ready to perish; expecting, not for your sake, but his own, to be accepted, and to find mercy with him. You do him the honour which he seeks, and which is

[1] Rom. xii. 1. [2] 2 Tim. i. 12.

most worthy of a God, the most excellent, and a self-sufficient Being, when you do thus. You answer the intendment of the whole gospel constitution, which bears this inscription, "To the praise of the glory of his grace," etc. It is honourable to him when you take his word, that they that believe in his Son shall "not perish, but have everlasting life." You herein set to your seal that he is true; and the more fully and with more significancy, when upon the credit of it you yield yourselves with an *assurance* that he will not destroy nor reject a poor creature that yields to him and casts itself upon his mercy.

7. Another ingredient into this yielding of yourselves must be *love*. As faith, in your yielding yourselves to God, aims at your own welfare and salvation; so love, in doing it, intends his service, and all the duty to him you are capable of doing him. You must be able to give this as the true reason of your act, and to resolve it into this principle, 'I yield myself to God, because I love him, and from the unfeigned love I bear to him;'—to tell *the world*, if there were occasion, 'He hath captivated my heart with his excellencies and his love; and hereupon, having nothing else, I tender myself to him:'—to tell *himself*, 'Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee; and because I do, I present myself to thee. It is all I can do. I wish myself ten thousand times better, for thy blessed sake; and if I had in me all the excellencies of many thousand angels, I were too mean a thing, and such as nothing but thy own goodness could count worthy thine acceptance. Because I love thee, I covet to be near thee, I covet to be thine, I covet to lead my life with thee,—to dwell in thy presence: far be it from me to be as without thee in the world as heretofore. I love thee, O Lord, my strength, because thine own perfections highly deserve it, and because thou hast heard my voice, and hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling. And I yield myself to thee, because I love thee. I make an offer of myself to be thy servant, thy servant, O Lord; thou hast loosed my bonds, and now I desire to bind myself in new ones to thee, that are never to

be loosed.' And you can make no doubt but that it ought to be done, therefore, with dispositions and a temper suitable to the state you are now willing to come into, that of a devoted servant, namely,—

8. With great *reverence and humility.* For, consider to whom you are tendering yourself; to the "high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity;"—to him that hath heaven for his throne, and earth for his footstool, and in comparison of whom all the inhabitants of the world are but as grasshoppers, and the nations of the earth as the drop of a bucket, and the dust of the balance, etc.; yea, to him against whom you have sinned, and before whose pure eyes you cannot, in yourself, but appear most offensively impure, so that you have reason to be ashamed and blush to lift up your eyes before him.

9. And yet it surely ought to be with *great joy and gladness of heart;* that he hath expressed himself willing to accept such as you, and that he hath made you willing to yield yourselves. The very thought should make your heart leap and spring within you, that he should ever have bespoken such as we are to yield ourselves to him, when he might have neglected us and let us wander endlessly, without ever looking after us more. How should it glad your hearts this day, to have such a message brought you from the great God, and which you find is written in his own word, to "yield yourselves to him!" Should not your hearts answer with wonder, 'And, blessed Lord! art thou willing again to have to do with us, who left thee having no cause, and who returning can be of no use to thee? O blessed be God, that we may yield ourselves back unto him! that we are invited and encouraged to it!' And you have cause to bless God, and rejoice, if this day you feel your heart willing to yield yourselves to him, and become his. Do you indeed find yourselves willing? You are willing "in the day of his power."[1] This is the day of his power upon your hearts. Many are called and refuse; he often "stretches out his hands, and no man regards."[2] Perhaps you have been called upon often before this day to do this same thing,

[1] Ps. cx. 3. [2] Prov. i. 24.

and neglected it,—had no heart to it; and he might have said to you, 'Now will I never treat with you more: if you should call, I will not hear; if you stretch out your hands, I will not regard it; but laugh at your destruction, and mock when your fear cometh.' But if,—now he is pleased to call once more,—your hearts do answer, 'Lord, here we are; we are now ready to surrender ourselves;'—you may conclude he hath poured out his Spirit upon you. The Spirit of the Lord is now moving upon this assembly. This is indeed a joyful day, the day which he hath himself made; and you ought to "rejoice and be glad in it."[1] When the people in David's days offered of their substance to God for the service of his house, it is said, "The people rejoiced, for that they offered willingly,"[2] and David, we are told, blessed God before all the congregation, saying, "Thine, O Lord, is the greatness and the power,....but who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee." If you are this day willing to offer yourselves, how much is this a greater thing! and it comes of him, and it is of his own you are now giving him; for he had a most unquestionable right in you before.

10. You should do it with *solemnity*.[3] For have you ever had a business of greater importance to transact in all your days? If you were to dispose of an estate or a child, would you not have all things be as express and clear as may be? And would they not insist to have it so with whom you deal in any such affair? And is there not a solemnity belonging to all such transactions, especially if you were to dispose of yourself, as in the conjugal covenant? though that is to be but for this short, uncertain time of life; so as that the relation you enter into to-day, may be by death dissolved and broken off again to-morrow. How much more explicit, clear, and solemn, should this your covenanting with God in Christ be, wherein you are to make over your soul to him, and for

[1] Ps. cxviii. 24. [2] 1 Chron. xxix. 9.

[3] See the Treatise of "Self-dedication," vol. iv. pp. 23—31.

eternity! You are to become his, under the bond of an everlasting covenant. You are entering a relation never to be broken off. This God is to be your God for ever and ever; and upon the same terms you are to be his. Is your immortal soul of less account with you than the temporal concernments of a mortal child, that you are placing out but for a term of years that soon expires? yea, or than a piece of ground, or a horse, or a sheep, about which how punctual and express are your bargains and contracts wont to be? Or, are only the matters of your soul, and wherein you have to do with the great God, to be slightly managed, or to be huddled up in confusion, or to be slid over in silent intimations? It is true that so express and solemn dealing in yielding and giving up yourselves to God, is not needful on his part, who understands sincerity without any expression of yours: but it is needful on your part, that a deep and lasting impression may be made upon your spirits; which, if you be sincere, you will not only feel yourselves to need, but your own temper and inclination will prompt you to it, accounting you can never be under bonds strong and sure enough to him. You will not only apprehend necessity, but will relish and taste pleasure, in any such transaction with the blessed God,—in avouching him to be your God, and yourself to be his. The more solemn it is, the more grateful it will be to you.

Do so then. Fall before his throne, prostrate yourself at his footstool; and having chosen your fit season, when nothing may interrupt you, and having shut up yourself with him, pour out your soul to him. Tell him you are now come on purpose to offer yourselves to him as his own. Oh that you would not let this night pass without doing so! Tell him you have too long neglected him, and forgotten to whom you belonged. Humbly beseech him for his pardon, and that he will now accept of you, for your Redeemer's sake, as being through his grace resolved never to live so great a stranger to him, or be such a wanderer from him more. And when you have done so, remember the time; let it be with you a noted, memorable day, as you would be

sure to keep the day in memory when you become such a one's servant or tenant, or your marriage-day. Renew this your agreement with God often, but forget it never.

Perhaps some may say, 'But what needs all this? Were we not once devoted and given up to God in baptism? and is not that sufficient? To what purpose should we do again a thing that hath once been so solemnly done?'

But here I desire you to consider,—Are you never to become the Lord's by your own choice? Are you always to be Christians only by another's Christianity, not by your own? And again, have you not broken your baptismal vow? have you not forgot it for the most part ever since? I am afraid too many never think of any such matter at all,—that ever they were devoted to God by others,—but only upon such an occasion as this, to make it an excuse that they may never do such a thing themselves. And consider, Were these Christian Romans on whom the apostle presses this duty never baptized, think you? Read over the foregoing part of the chapter, wherein you find him putting them in mind that they had been baptized into Christ's death and buried with him in baptism, and that therefore this was to be an argument to them why they *should* "yield themselves unto God," not why they should not. Wherefore our way is now plain and open to what we have further to do, namely,—

Secondly, To apply this practical doctrine, and press the precept further upon you, which hath been opened to you and pressed by parts in some measure already, in our insisting on the several heads which you have seen do belong to it and are one way or other comprehended in it: which will therefore make this latter part of our work the shorter, and capable of being dispatched in the fewer words; and with blessed effect, if the Spirit of the living God shall vouchsafe to cooperate, and deal with your hearts and mine. Shall we then all agree upon this thing? Shall we unite in one resolution, 'We will be the Lord's?' Shall every one say in his own heart, 'For my part, I will, and so will I, and so will I?' Come now, one and all. This is no unlawful confederacy,

it is a blessed combination! Come then, "let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant, not to be forgotten."[1] With whatsoever after-solemnity you may renew this obligation and bond of God upon your souls,—as I hope you will do it, every one apart, in your closets, or in any corner, and you cannot do it too fully or too often, —yet let us now all resolve the thing, and this assembly make a joint surrender and oblation of itself to the Great God, our sovereign, rightful Lord, through our blessed Redeemer and Mediator, by the eternal Spirit, (which I hope is breathing and at work among us,) as one living sacrifice, as all of us alive from the dead, to be for ever sacred to him! O blessed assembly! O happy act and deed! With how grateful and well-pleasing an odour will the kindness and dutifulness of this offering ascend and be received above! God will accept, heaven will rejoice, angels will concur and gladly fall in with us. We hereby adjoin ourselves in relation, and in heart and spirit, "to the general assembly, to the church of the first-born ones written in heaven, to the innumerable company of angels, and to the spirits of just men made perfect," and within a little while shall be actually among them! Is it possible there should be now among us any dissenting vote? Consider,—

1. It is a plain and unquestionable thing you are pressed unto,—a thing that admits of no dispute, and against which you have nothing to say, and about which you cannot but be already convinced. And it is a matter full of danger, and upon which tremendous consequences depend, to go on in any practice or in any neglect, against a conviction of judgment and conscience. For your own heart and conscience must condemn you if you consider; and it betrays you if you consider not. How fearful a thing is it for a man to carry his own doom in his own bosom; to go up and down the world with a self-condemning heart, if it be awake; and which, if it be not, yet cannot sleep always, and must awake with the greater terror at length! And in so plain

[1] Jer. l. 5.

a case it is most certainly God's deputy, and speaks his mind: "If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart,"[1] etc.

2. It is *that*, therefore, the refusal whereof none of you would avow. Who among us can have the confidence to stand forth and say, 'I will be none of the Lord's'? Would any man be content to go with this written upon his forehead from day to day? And doth not that signify such a refusal to be a shameful thing? That must needs be an ill temper of mind which one would be ashamed any one should know.

3. And it is a mean thing to dissemble; to be willing to be thought and counted what we are not, or to do what in truth we do not.

4. And considering what inspection we are under, it is a vain thing. For do we not know that "eyes which are as a flame of fire" behold us, and pierce into our very souls? Do we not know "all things in us are naked and manifest to him with whom we have to do?"[2] and that he discerns it, if there be any heart among us that is not sincere in this thing?

5. Consider that this is the very design of the gospel you live under. What doth it signify or intend, but to recall apostate creatures back again to God? What is the Christian religion you profess, but a state of devotedness to God under the conduct and through the mediation of Christ? You frustrate the gospel, and make your religion a nullity and an empty name, till you do this.

6. And how will you lift up your heads at last in the great day, and before this God, the Judge of all? You cannot now plead ignorance. If perhaps any among you have not been formerly so expressly called and urged to this yielding yourselves to God, now you are: and from his own plain word it is charged upon you. Will not this be remembered hereafter? What will you say when the great God, whose creature you are, speaks to you with the voice of thunder, and bids you gird up your loins, and give him an answer?

[1] 1 John iii. 20. [2] Heb. iv. 13.

'Were you not on such a day, in such a place, demanded and claimed in my name? Were you not told, were you not convinced, you ought to yield yourselves to me? and yet you did it not. Are you prepared to contest with your Maker? Where is your right, where is your power, to stand against me in this contest?'

7. But if you sincerely yield yourselves, the main controversy is at an end between the great God and you. All your former sins are pardoned and done away at once. Those glad tidings you have often heard, that import nothing but "glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, and good-will towards men," plainly show that the great God whom you had offended, hath no design to destroy you, but only to make you yield, and give him back his own. Though you have formerly lived a wandering life, and been as a vagabond on the earth from your true Owner, it will be all forgotten. How readily was the returning prodigal received!—and so will you. How quiet rest will you have this night, when upon such terms there is a reconciliation between God and you! You have given him his own, and he is pleased, and most of all for this, that he hath you now to save you. You were his to destroy before; now you are his to save. He could easily destroy you against your will, but it is only with your will, he having made you willing, that he must save you. And his bidding you yield, implies his willingness to do so. Oh, how much of gospel is there in this invitation to you to yield yourselves to God! Consider it as the voice of grace. Will he that bids a poor wretch yield itself, reject or destroy when it doth so?

8. And how happily may you now live the rest of your days in this world! You will live under his care; for will he not take care of his own, those that are of his own house? An infidel would. You are now of his family, under his immediate government and under his continual blessing.

And were you now to give an account where you have been to-day, and what you have been doing; if you say you have been engaged this day in a solemn treaty with the Lord

of heaven and earth, about yielding yourselves to him; and it be further asked, 'Well, and what was the issue? have you agreed?' must you, any of you, be obliged by the truth of the case to say, 'No!' Astonishing answer! What! hast thou been treating with the great God, the God of thy life, and not agreed? What, man! did he demand of thee any unreasonable thing? 'Only to yield myself.' Why, that was in all the world the most reasonable thing. Wretched creature! whither now wilt thou go? What wilt thou do with thyself? Where wilt thou lay thy hated head? But if you can say, 'Blessed be God, I gladly agreed to the proposal; he gave me the grace not to deny him:' then may it be said, this was a good day's work, and you will have cause to bless God for this day as long as you have a day to live.

OF

THOUGHTFULNESS FOR THE MORROW.

WITH

AN APPENDIX

CONCERNING THE IMMODERATE DESIRE OF FOREKNOWING THINGS TO COME.

TO THE

RIGHT HONOURABLE ANN, LADY WHARTON.

It was, madam, the character an ancient worthy in the Christian church gave of a noble person of your sex, that, in reference to the matters of religion, she was not only a learner, but a judge; and accordingly he inscribes to her divers of his writings,—even such as did require a very accurate judgment in the reading of them; which remain unto this day, dispersedly in several parts of his works, dignified with her often prefixed name. A greater indeed than he, mentions it as an ill character, to be not "a doer of the law, but a judge."[1] It makes a great difference in the exercise of the same faculty, and in doing the same thing, with what mind and design it is done. There is a judging, that we may learn; and a judging, that we may not: a judgment subservient to our duty, and a judgment opposite to it. Without a degree of the former, no one can ever be a serious Christian; by means of the latter, many never are. The world through wisdom knew not God. A cavilling, litigious wit, in the confidence whereof any set themselves above their rule, and make it their business only to censure it, as if they would rather find faults in it than themselves, is as inconsistent with sincere piety, as a humbly judicious, discerning mind is necessary to it. This proceeds from a due savour and relish of divine things, peculiar to them in whom a heavenly spirit and principle have the possession, and a governing power:—"They that are after the Spirit, do savour the things of the Spirit;" the other from the prepossession and prejudice of a disaffected, carnal mind:—"They that are after the flesh, do only savour the things of the flesh."

The ability God hath endowed your ladyship with to judge of

[1] James iv. 11.

the truth that is after godliness, is *that* you are better pleased to use than hear of. I shall therefore be silent herein, and rather displease many of them that know you, who will be apt to think a copious subject is neglected, than say anything that may offend either against your ladyship's inclination or my own. Here is nothing abstruse and difficult for you to exercise a profound judgment upon, nor anything curious to gratify a pleasant wit; but plain things suitable to you, upon accounts common to the generality of Christians,—not that are peculiar to yourself. It is easy to a well-tempered mind of how high intellectual excellencies soever, to descend to the same level with the rest; when for them to reach up to the other's pitch, is not so much as possible.

Our heavenly Father keeps not, as to the substantials of our nutriment, distinct tables for his children; but all must eat the same spiritual meat, and drink the same spiritual drink. He hath not one gospel for great wits, and another for plainer people; but as all that are born of him must meet at length in one end, so they must all walk by the same rule and in the same way thither. And when I had first mentioned this text of Scripture in your hearing, the savour you expressed to me of the subject easily induced me, when afterwards I reckoned a discourse upon it might be of common use, to address that also, such as it is, in this way to your ladyship; accounting the mention of your name might draw the eyes of some to it that have no reason to regard the author's; and that by this means, if it be capable of proving beneficial to any, the benefit might be diffused so much the farther.

The aptness of the materials and subject here discoursed of to do good generally, I cannot doubt. Neither our present duty or peace, nor our future safety or felicity, can be provided for as they ought, till our minds be more abstracted from time, and taken up about the unseen, eternal world. While our thoughts are too earnestly engaged about the events of future time, they are vain, bitter, impure, and diverted from our nobler and most necessary pursuits. They follow much the temper and bent of our spirits, which are often too intent upon what is uncertain, and perhaps impossible.

All good and holy persons cannot live in good times; for who should bear up the name of God in bad, and transmit it to succeeding times?—Especially when good men are not of the same mind, it

is impossible; and more especially, when they have not learned as yet to bear one another's differences. The same time and state of things which please some, must displease others. For some, that will think themselves much injured if they be not thought very pious persons, will be pleased with nothing less than the destruction of them that differ from them. So that while this is designed and attempted only, generally neither sort is pleased; the one because it is not done, the other because it is in doing.

It must be a marvellous alteration of men's minds that must make the times please us all; while upon supposition of their remaining unaltered, there is nothing will please one sort but to see the other pagans or beggars; who in the meantime are not enough mortified, either to their religion or the necessary accommodations of human life, as to be well pleased with either.

To trust God cheerfully with the government of this world, and to live in the joyful hope and expectation of a better, are the only means to relieve and ease us, and give us a vacancy for the proper work and business of our present time.

This is the design of the following discourses: the former whereof is directed against the careful thoughts which are apt to arise in our minds concerning the events of future time, upon a fear what they may be; the other, which by way of appendix is added to the former, tends to repress the immoderate desire of knowing what they shall be: which latter I thought, in respect of its affinity to the other, fit to be added to it; and, in respect of the commonness and ill tendency of this distemper, very necessary. And indeed both the extremes in this matter are very unchristian and pernicious;—a stupid neglect of the Christian interest and of God's providence about it, on the one hand; and an enthusiastic frenzy, carrying men to expect they well know not what or why, on the other.

Our great care should be to serve that interest faithfully in our own stations, for our little time, that will soon be over. Your ladyship hath been called to serve it in a family wherein it hath long flourished, and which it hath dignified beyond all the splendour that antiquity and secular greatness could confer upon it. The Lord grant it may long continue to flourish there, under the joint influence of your noble consort and your own; and afterwards, in a posterity that may imitate their ancestors in substantial piety

and solid goodness : which is a glory that will not fade, nor vary ; not change with times, but equally recommend itself to sober and good men in all times ; whereas that which arises from the esteem of a party can neither be diffusive nor lasting. It is true that I cannot but reckon it a part of any one's praise, in a time wherein there are different sentiments and ways in circumstantial matters relating to religion, to incline most to that which I take to come nearest the truth and our common rule. But, as was said by one that was a great and early light in the Christian church, 'That is not philosophy which is professed by this or that sect, but that which is true in all sects ;' so nor do I take that to be religion which is peculiar to this or that party of Christians,—many of whom are too apt to say, 'Here is Christ, and there is Christ,' as if he were divided,—but that which is according to the mind of God among them all.

And I must profess to have that honour for your ladyship which I sincerely bear and most justly owe unto you, chiefly upon the account, not of the things wherein you differ from many other serious Christians,—though therein you agree also with myself,—as for those things wherein you agree with them all. Under which notion, and under the sensible obligation of your many singular favours, I am,

Madam,
Your ladyship's very humble
And devoted servant in the gospel,
JOHN HOWE.

OF THOUGHTFULNESS FOR THE FUTURE.

MATTHEW vi. 34.

'TAKE THEREFORE NO THOUGHT FOR THE MORROW: FOR THE MORROW SHALL TAKE THOUGHT FOR THE THINGS OF ITSELF. SUFFICIENT UNTO THE DAY IS THE EVIL THEREOF."

THE negative precept, or the prohibition, in the first words of this verse, I shall take for the principal ground of the intended discourse; but shall make use of the following words for the same purpose for which they are here subjoined by our Lord; namely, the enforcement of it.

For our better understanding the import of the precept, two things in it require explication:—how we are to understand "the morrow;" and what is meant by the "thoughtfulness" we are to abstain from in reference thereto.

First. By "the morrow" must be meant some measure of time or other, and such occurrences as it may be supposed shall fall within the compass of that time. We are therefore to consider,—

I. What *portion or measure of time* may be here signified by "to-morrow;" for some time it must signify, in the first place as fundamental to the further meaning; not abstractly or for itself, but as it is the continent of such or such things as may fall within that time. And so that measure of time may,—

1. Admit, no doubt, to be taken strictly for the very next day, according to the literal import of the word "to-morrow." But,—

2. It is also to be taken in a much larger sense,—for the whole of our remaining time, all our futurity in this world. Indeed, the whole time of our life on earth is spoken of in the Scriptures but as a day: "Let him alone, that he may accomplish, as a hireling, his day."[1] We are a sort of ἡμερόβιοι,—"short-lived creatures:" we live but a day, take the whole of our time together. Much less strange is it that the little residue, the future time that is before us, which we do not know how little it may be, should be spoken of but as a day. Experience hath taught even sensual epicures so to account their remaining time: 'Let us eat and drink; for to-morrow we shall die;'—that is, very shortly. They were right in their computation, but very wrong in their inference. It should have been, 'Let us watch and pray to-day; we are to die to-morrow: let us labour for *eternity*, because time is so short.' But say they, 'Let us eat and drink to-day; for to-morrow we shall die.' A day to eat and drink was, it seems, a great gain. And if the phrase were not so used, to signify all the residue of our future time, yet by consequence it must be so understood. For if we take "to-morrow" in the strictest sense for the very next day, they that are not permitted with solicitude to look forward so far as the very next day, much less may they to a remoter and more distant time. Yea, and we may in some sense extend it not only to all *our* future time, but simply to all future time, as that measures the concernments and affairs, not of this world only, but,—which is more considerable,—even of that lesser select community, the kingdom of God in it, mentioned in the foregoing verse; which kingdom, besides its future eternal state, lies also spread and stretched throughout all time unto the end of the world. And as to its present and temporal state, or as it falls under the measure of time, it is not unsupposable that it may be within the compass of our Saviour's design to forbid unto his disciples—who were not only to pursue the blessedness of that kingdom in the other world, but to intend the service of it in this—an intemperate and

[1] Job xiv. 6.

vexatious solicitude about the success of their endeavours for the promoting its present interest: that is, after he had more directly forbidden their undue carefulness about their own little concernments, what they should eat, drink, or put on; and directed them rather and more principally to seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness, with an assurance that those other things should be added to them; it seems not improbable he might in conclusion give this general direction, as with a more especial reference to the private concernments of human life about which common frailty might make them more apt to be unduly thoughtful, so with some oblique and secondary reference to the affairs of that kingdom too which they were here to serve, as well as hereafter to partake and enjoy; and about the success of which service (being once engaged in it, and the difficulties they were to encounter appearing great and discouraging to so inconsiderable persons as they must reckon themselves) they might be somewhat over solicitous also.

Nor, though they might not as yet understand their own work, nor consequently have the prospect of its difficulties as yet in view, are we to think our Saviour intended to limit the usefulness of the instructions he now gave them to the present time, but meant them to be of future use to them, as occasions should afterwards occur. As we also find that they *did* recollect some other sayings of his, and understand better the meaning of them, when particular occasions brought them to mind, and discovered how apposite and applicable they then were.[1] So that we may fitly understand this prohibition to intend universally, a repressing of that too great aptitude and proneness in the minds of men unto undue excursions into futurity, their intemperate and extravagant rangings and roamings into that *unknown country*, that 'terra incognita,' in which we can but bewilder and lose ourselves to no purpose. Therefore,—

II. And more principally, by "to-morrow" we are to understand *the things* that may fall within that compass of

[1] Luke xxiv. 8; John ii. 22.

future time. For time can only be the object of our care in that relative sense; as it refers unto such and such occurrences and emergencies that may fall into it. And so our Saviour explains himself in the very next words, that by "to-morrow" he means the *things* of to-morrow: "To-morrow shall take care for the things of itself."

And yet here we must carefully distinguish, as to those "things" of to-morrow,—matters of *event* and of *duty*. We are not to think these the equally prohibited objects of our thoughts and care. *Duty* belongs to us, it falls within our province; and there are, no doubt, thoughts to be employed how I may continue on in a course of duty unto which I am by all the most sacred obligations tied for a stated course that may lie before me, let it be never so long, and there be never so many to-morrows in it. There ought to be thoughts used of this sort concerning the duties of the morrow, and of all my future time: 'If it please God to give me such additional time, I will love him to-morrow, I will serve him to-morrow, I will trust him to-morrow, I will walk with him to-morrow. I will, through the grace of God, live in his fear, service, and communion, even as long as I have a day to live.' Upon such terms doth every sincere Christian bind himself to God, even for always; as God binds himself to them on the same terms. "This God shall be our God for ever and ever; he shall be our guide even unto death."[1] The case can never alter with us in this regard; but as the worthiest object of all our thoughts is yesterday and to-day the same, and for ever, so should the course of our thoughts be too, in reference to that blessed object: "Every day will I bless thee, and praise thy name for ever and ever."[2] "I will sing unto the Lord as long as I live; I will sing praise to my God while I have my being."[3] The thoughts of our hearts should be much exercised this way, how it may be thus with us in all future time; that to-morrow, in this respect, may be as this day, and much more abundant, as is spoken on much another account.[4] 'To-morrow shall be as this day,

[1] Ps. xlviii. 14. [2] Ps. cxlv. 2. [3] Ps. civ. 33. [4] Isa. lvi. 12.

God assisting; and much more abundant as to my love to him, serving of him, conversing with him, doing and designing for him, which are to run through all my days.'

But now for the *events* of to-morrow, they are things quite of another consideration,—they do not belong to us, they are not of the τὰ ἐφ' ἡμῖν, none of the things within our compass. To employ ourselves with excessive intension of thoughts and cares concerning them, is to meddle without our sphere, beyond what we have any warrant for, further than as it is in some cases supposable there may be some connexion and dependence between such and such events and my own either sin or duty. Now events that may occur to us to-morrow, or in our future time, you know, are distinguishable into good or bad, grateful and ungrateful, pleasing to us or displeasing. Good or grateful events, you easily apprehend, are not here intended. We do not use to perplex ourselves about good things, otherwise than as they may be wanting and as we may be deprived of them; which privation or want is an evil. And under that notion our Saviour considers the object of the prohibited thoughtfulness, as his after words show,—"Sufficient unto the day is the evil of it;" and therefore gives caution not equally against all forethoughts about the events of future time, of which some may be both rational and pleasant, but against forebodings and presages of evil and direful things: as lest such thoughts should slide into our minds, or impose and obtrude themselves upon us: 'Alas! what shall I do to live to-morrow? I am afraid I shall want bread for to-morrow, or for my future time.' This, our Saviour says, is paganish: "After these things do the Gentiles seek," that, as is intimated, have no Father to take care of them; "your heavenly Father knoweth you have need of these things;"[1] and directs his disciples to a nobler object of their thoughts and care, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God,"[2] wherein, as their future reward, so their present work and business was to lie: and then adds, "Take no thought for to-morrow;"—as much as to say, 'It would be

[1] Verse 32. [2] Verse 33.

indeed an ill thing if you should want bread to-morrow, and it would be worse if the affairs of God's kingdom should miscarry, or you be excluded it: but mind you your own present work, and be not unduly concerned about these surmised bad events; God will provide.' This is then, in short, the object of this prohibited thoughtfulness,—future time, including whatsoever ungrateful events we suppose and pre-apprehend in it

Secondly. We are to inquire about the "thoughtfulness" prohibited in reference hereto. It cannot be that *all use of thoughts* about future events, even such as when they occur may prove afflictive, is intended to be forbidden; which indeed may be collected from the import of the word in the text, that signifies another, peculiar sort of thinking, as we shall hereafter have more occasion to take notice. We were made and are naturally thinking creatures; yea, and fore-thinking, or capable of prospiciency and foresight. It is that by which in part man is distinguished from beast. Without disputing as some do,[1] how far nature in this or that man doth contribute to divination and prophecy, we may say of man indefinitely, he is a sort of divining creature; and of human nature in common, that it much excels the brutal in this,—that whereas sense is limited to the present, reason hath dignified our nature by adding to it a sagacity, and enabling us to use prospection, in reference to what yet lies more remotely before us. And though we are too apt to a faulty excess herein, and to be over-presaging,—which it is the design of this discourse to show,—yet we are not to think that all use of any natural faculty can be a fault; for that would be to charge a fault on the Author of nature. The faculties will be active. To plant them therefore in our natures and forbid their use, were not consistent with the wisdom, righteousness, and goodness, by which they are implanted. It must therefore be our business to show what thoughtfulness is *not*, and then what *is*, within the compass of this prohibition.

[1] Maimonides, *Mor. Nevochim;* Meric Casaubon, *On Enthusiasm.*

I. What is not. There is in the general a *prudent*, and there is a *Christian*, use of forethought about matters of that nature already specified; which we cannot understand it was our Saviour's meaning to forbid:—

1. A *prudent;* which imports reference to an end. Our actions are so far said to be governed by prudence and to proceed from it, as they do designedly and aptly serve a valuable end. The foresight of evils probable yea even possible to befall us, is useful, upon a *prudential* account, to several very considerable ends and purposes: either to put us upon doing the more good in the meantime; or upon the endeavour, within moderate bounds and as more may be needful, of possessing more; or that we may avert or avoid imminent evils; or that what cannot be avoided, we may be the better able to bear:—

i. That we may be incited hereupon to do all the good we can in the world in the meantime, before such evils overtake and prevent us. For prudence itself will teach a man to account, and hath taught even heathens, that he doth not live in this world merely that he may live; that he is not to live wholly to himself: his friends claim a part in him, his neighbours a part, his country a part, the world a part. He lives not at the rate of a prudent man, that thinks of living only to indulge and gratify himself, and consult his own ease and pleasure; and upon this consideration his prudence should instruct him to do all the present good he can, because there are evils in view that may narrow his capacity and snatch from him the opportunity of doing much. The evil day, as it is more eminently called, is not far off. He should therefore bethink himself of doing good to his friend (as the son of Sirach speaks) before he die. And there are other evils that may anticipate that day, unto which the preacher hath reference,[1] when he directs to "give a portion to seven and also eight, because we know not what evil shall be upon the earth." We cannot tell how soon we may have neither power nor time left to do it in. Yea, and,—

[1] Eccles. xi. 2.

ii. That we may be provided as far as it lies within the compass of regular endeavour, of such needful good things as are requisite for our support in this our pilgrimage; and especially upon occasion of a foreseen calamity approaching. This, as prudence doth require, so we cannot suppose our Saviour doth by a constant rule forbid, who sometime enjoined his disciples to carry a scrip with them, though at another time—that they might once for all be convinced of the sufficient care of Providence, when or howsoever they should be precluded from using their own—he did, extraordinarily, forbid it. And it is evident that in common cases it is more especially incumbent on the master of a family to make provision for his household for the future; to provide in the more convenient season of the year, as in summer, for the following winter; a document which the slothful are sent to learn from a very despicable instructor: "Go to the ant thou sluggard."[1] And again,—

iii. That the approaching evil may, if avoidable, be declined: "A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself; but the simple pass on, and are punished,"[2]—and perhaps for this their simplicity, that they regardlessly go on with a stupid negligence of all warnings, till the stroke and storm fall: which, whereas there may be one event to the wise man and the fool,[3] will prove to the one a mere affliction; to the other upon this as well as other accounts, a proper and most deserved punishment: because, as is there said, the wise man's eyes are in his head, prompt and ready for their present use; the fool walks in darkness,—which must be understood of a voluntary, self-created darkness, as if he had plucked out his own eyes; which is "the wickedness of folly," as the same Ecclesiastes' phrase is.[4]

iv. That what cannot be avoided may be the more easily borne. Every man counts it desirable not to be surprised by evils that are unavoidable and no way to be averted. Prudence will in such a case use forethoughts to better purpose than

[1] Prov. vi. 6, etc. [2] Prov. xxii. 3. [3] As Eccles. ii. 14. [4] Chap. vii. 25.

only to anticipate and multiply an affliction, or consequently to increase its weight; but much to alleviate and lessen it by learning to bear it gradually, and by gentle essays to acquaint the shoulder with the burden,—to inure and compose the mind, and reconcile it to the several circumstances, so far as they are foreseen, of that less pleasing state we are next to pass into: which advantage might be one reason why Solomon, in the above-mentioned place,—though, according to the genius of that reasoning book, he variously discourses things on the one hand and the other,—prefers wisdom to folly, as much as light to darkness, though one event may happen to both.[1] It is an uncomfortable thing to walk in darkness; and,—supposing there be that wisdom that can make due use of a prospect,—not to see an evil till we meet and feel it. Unexpected evils carry, as such, a more peculiar sting and pungency with them; when any shall say, "Peace, peace, till sudden destruction comes upon them, as travail on a woman with child."[2] Nor can we reasonably think it was any part of our Saviour's intendment, to advise his disciples unto such a self-revenging security,—who so often enjoins them watchfulness because of what should come to pass; or that he should counsel them to the same thing for which he blames and upbraids the Pharisees and Sadducees,—their not discerning the signs of the times. Upon all these prudential accounts there is a use of forethoughts about future approaching evils.

2. And there is a further use to be made of them upon an account more purely *Christian*. I would tempt none, under pretence of distinguishing these heads, to think they should oppose them. Christianity must be understood, in reference to common prudence, to be cumulative not privative. It adds to it therefore: opposes it not, but supposes it rather. And indeed, it adds *that* upon the account whereof we are far the more liable to afflicting evils, and so are the more concerned to use forethoughts about them; for whereas there are much rarer instances of suffering merely for the duties of natural

[1] Eccles. ii. 13, 14. [2] 1 Thess. v. 3.

religion, which the common reason of man acknowledges equal and unexceptionable, we are plainly told that "all that will live godly *in Christ Jesus* shall suffer persecution," [1] though not in all times alike. Here therefore, it is necessary we have serious forethoughts of the evils which seem likely to befall us, for the Christian interest, upon several accounts:—

i. That we may *espouse it sincerely*, and enter ourselves the disciples of Christ with a true heart; which we are not likely to do if we understand not his terms, and do not consider the state of the case. What is done *without judgment*, or upon mistake, is not like to be done *in truth*. If we fall in with Christ and Christianity upon supposition of only halcyon days in our time, and that we shall never be called to suffer for him, we shall most probably deceive ourselves and prove false to him. It will appear our bargain was void in the making, as to any tie we can have upon him. We are to reckon, when we take on the yoke of Christ, of bearing also his cross, and be in a preparation of mind to lose and suffer all things for him. And to use forethoughts of this kind is what he enjoins us,[2] under the expression of "counting the cost,"—what it may amount unto to be a resolved, sincere Christian. And he tells us withal what the cost is,—to forsake all; [3] to abandon father, mother, wife, children, brethren, sisters, and one's own life; [4] and all this, as is often inculcated, as that without which a man cannot be His disciple,—that is, not *become* one, as there the phrase must signify: so that though he have come to Him,—that is, have begun to treat, ("If a man come to me,")—and do not so in his previous resolution, nothing is concluded between Christ and him.

ii. That, upon this constant prospect of the state of our case, we *may endeavour our own confirmation*, from time to time, *in our fidelity to him*. For new and unforethought occasions, that we have not comprehended in their particulars,—or in equivalence,—may beget new impressions and dispositions to revolt. Besides all that had come upon those faithful con-

[1] 2 Tim. iii. 12. [2] Luke xiv. 26. [3] Verse 33. [4] Verse 26.

fessors,[1] that they were "sore broken in the place of dragons, and covered with the shadow of death,"[2]—notwithstanding which they appeal to God, that their heart was not turned back and that their steps had not declined from his way, and offer themselves to his search, whether they had forgotten him or stretched out their hands to a strange god,—they add, "Yea, for thy sake we are killed all the day long." They reckon upon nothing but suffering, and that to utmost extremity, all the rest of their day, and yet are still of the same mind. Patience must be laid in, that may be drawn forth unto long suffering. And we are to "endure to the end, that we may be saved." And therefore suffering to the last is to be forethought of; through the whole course of which state of suffering we must resolve through the grace of Christ, never to desert his interest. Otherwise we are so deceived as he that goes to build a tower, without counting what his expense will be beforehand; or he that is to meet an enemy in the field, without making a computation of the equality or inequality of the forces on the one side and the other; as our Saviour further discourses in the above-mentioned context.

iii. That we may cast with ourselves how, not only not to desert the Christian interest, but *most advantageously to serve it.* Suppositions ought to be made of whatsoever difficulties seem not unlikely to be in our case, that we may bethink ourselves how we may be of most use to the interest of our great Master and Lord upon such and such emergencies. For such a supposition he himself suggests:[3] If "they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another." And it is likely he gives this direction not with respect merely to their being safe, but serviceable, as the following words seem to intimate: "For verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come;" as much as to say, 'You will have work to do whither ever you come, and will scarce have done all within that allotment of time you will have for it, before the vengeance determined upon this people prevent you of further opportunity among them:' as

[1] Ps. xliv. [2] Ver. 19. [3] Matt. x. 23.

Tertullian discourses at large, and not irrationally, upon this subject; and Augustine to the like purpose.[1]

iv. That we may be the more excited to *pray for the preservation and prosperity of the Christian interest.* Those we should always reckon the worst days, that are of worst abode[2] unto it, though we expect our own share in the calamities of such days. When his interest declines, and there are phenomena in providence,—appearances and aspects,—very threatening to it, there ought to be the more earnest and importunate praying. And that there may be so, our eye should look forward and be directed towards the foreshown events, as from whence we are to take arguments and motives to prayer. And we should reckon therefore they are presignified that we may be excited and a dutiful love to his great name be awakened in us. 'What shall be done to thy great name? what shall become of thy kingdom among men?' Nor can we ever pray, "Thy kingdom come," without a prospect to futurity. Yea, and all prayer hath reference to somewhat yet future. If therefore all forethoughts about the concernments of future time were simply forbidden, there were no place left for prayer at all. Hitherto then we see how far taking thought about the future is *not* forbidden.

II. We are next, therefore, to show wherein it is. And it appears, from what hath been said, it is *not evil in itself,* for then it must be universally so, and no circumstance could make it good or allowable in any kind. Therefore it must be evil only either by participation or by redundancy. And so it may be either as *proceeding from evil* or *as tending to evil;* that is, in respect either of the evil causes from which it comes or of the ill effects to which it tends. Under these two heads we shall comprehend what is to be said for opening

[1] Expos. in Evang. Johan. c. x. "If they persecute you in one city, flee," etc.—"Yet, Lord, thou sayest, 'The hireling fleeth.' Who is this hireling? He that flies, seeking his own things, not the things of Jesus Christ. Thou hast fled (though present) because thou wast silent; wast silent, because thou wast afraid: fear is the flight of the mind," etc.

[2] Or, as we should say, 'That bode worst.'—*Ed.*

the sense wherein it may be understood to fall under the present prohibition:—

1. All such thoughtfulness must be understood to be evil and forbidden as hath an *ill root and original;* as before, our Saviour, in this sermon of his, forbids somewhat else under this notion, because it cometh of evil. What doth so, partakes from thence an ill savour. Those are evil thoughts that participate, and as it were, taste of, an evil cause: which may be manifold; as,—

i. It may proceed from a groundless and *too confident presumption that we shall live to-morrow,* and that our *to-morrow* shall be a long day, or that we have much time before us in the world; which, as it really is a great uncertainty, ought always to be so esteemed. Men presume first, and take somewhat for granted which they ought not, and make that their hypothesis, upon which they lay a frame of iniquity of this kind, and make it the ground of much forbidden thoughtfulness and care. They forget in whose hands their breath is; assume to themselves the measuring of their own time, as if they were lords of it; take it for granted they shall live so long; and accordingly form their projects, lay designs, and then grow very solicitous how they will succeed and take effect. By breaking another former law, they lead themselves into the transgression of this: that is, first boast of to-morrow, against the prohibition,[1] and then proceed unduly to take thought for to-morrow;—the case which we find falls under animadversion:[2] "To-morrow we will go into such a city, and buy and sell, and get gain; whereas," saith that apostle, "ye know not what shall be on the morrow: for what is your life? It is even a vapour," etc. Would we learn to die daily, and consider that for aught we know, to-morrow, in the strictest sense, may prove the day of our death, and that then, in that very day, must our thoughts perish, we should think less intensely on the less fruitful subjects; our thoughts would take a higher flight, not flutter in the dust and fill our souls with gravel, as is our wont;

[1] Prov. xxvii. 1. [2] James iv. 13, 14.

and less, no doubt, offend against the true meaning of this interdict of our Saviour in the text.

ii. There may be an undue, forbidden thoughtfulness about to-morrow, proceeding from a *too curious inquisitiveness, and affectation of prying into futurity.* Men have nothing here but gloom and cloudy darkness before them. Fain they would with their weak and feeble beam pierce the cloud, and cannot; it is retorted, and doth not enter. They think to re-enforce it by a throng and thick succession of thoughts; but do only think themselves into the more confusion,—cannot see what is next before them. What new scene shall first open upon them, they cannot tell. And, as is natural to them that converse in dubious darkness, their thoughts turn all to fear. And they therefore think the more, and as their thoughts multiply, increase their fear. Whereas they should retire, and abstain from conversing in so disconsolate a region among shades and spectres, which are their own creatures perhaps, for the most part; and wherewith they first cheat and then fright themselves. They should choose rather to converse in the light of former and present things which they know; and of such greater and more considerable futurities as God hath thought fit plainly to reveal; and be contented there should be *arcana*, and that such future things remain so, as God hath reserved and locked up from us. "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power," saith our Saviour departing, unto his disciples, when he was now going up into glory.[1] Fain they would have known how it should speed afterwards with them and his interest. "Wilt thou at this time," say they, "restore again the kingdom to Israel?" "It is not for you," says he, "to know," etc. If God should any way give us light into futurity, it is to be accepted, if we are sure it is from him, and be regarded according to what proofs there are that it is so as,—sometimes he doth premonish of very considerable events that are coming on; and, according to what of evidence there is in any such monition, ought the

[1] Acts i. 7.

impressions to be upon our spirits. But when out of our own fancies we will supply the want of such a discovery, and curiously busy,—much more if we hereupon torment,—ourselves to no purpose; this we cannot doubt is forbidden us. But we shall say more of it hereafter apart by itself. And with this we may most fitly connect,—

iii. That such thoughtfulness about the future is to be concluded undue and forbidden as proceeds from a *too conceited self-indulgent opinion of our own wisdom,* and ability to foresee what shall happen; for from our very earnest desire to foreknow, may easily arise a belief that we do or can do so. As "a dream cometh from multitude of business," the over-busy agitation and exercise of our minds about what shall be, makes us dream; and in our dream we seem to ourselves to see visions, and have before us very accurate schemes and prospects of things. How inventive are men and ingenious in contriving their frames and models, either direful and dismal, or pleasant and entertaining, as the disposition of their minds is, compared with the present aspect of affairs, which variously impresses them this way or that! If they be terrible and dismal, but raised only upon a conceited opinion of our own great skill and faculty in foreseeing, they have their afflicting evil in themselves; our own creature, of itself ravenous, tears and torments us. If they be pleasant and delectable, yet they may become afflicting by accident: for some one unthought-of thing, falling out contrary to our expectation, may overturn our whole model and fabric, as a touch doth a house of cards; and then we play the child's part in deploring, as we did in erecting it,—fret, and despair that things can ever be brought to so good a posture again. But whether they be the one or the other, their sinful evil,—which we are now considering,—they owe to one and the same culpable cause, that we are so overwise, and take upon us with such confidence to conclude of what shall be, as if our wisdom were the measure of things, or could give laws to Providence from which it can never vary. It is not in itself a fault to be afraid of what is formidable

or pleased with what is pleasant, except it be with excess. But it is our fault to be either frighted with shadows, or to surfeit ourselves with a temporary, short pleasure drawn out from them, that may afterward revenge itself upon us with the sharper torture; whenas all their power to hurt us they receive from ourselves, and have no more of reality or existence than a strong imagination, and confidence of our own undeceivable wit and sagacity, gives them. Who in all the world have minds so vexed with sudden passions of fear and hope, joy and sorrow, anger and despair, as your smattering pedants in policy,—such as set up for dons, and who fancy themselves men of great reach, able to foretell remote changes, and see things whose distance makes them invisible to all but themselves; that hold a continual council-table in their own divining heads; think themselves to comprehend all reasons of state; are as busy as princes and emperors or their greatest ministers; mightily taken up in all affairs but those of their own private stations; and thereby qualified to be state weather-glasses, but prove no better for the use they pretend for than a common almanac, where you may write "wet" for "dry" throughout the year, and as much hit the truth? They that shall consider the abstruseness of designs and transactions that relate to the public, and how much resolutions about them depend upon what it is fit should be commonly unknown, so that they that judge without doors must think and talk at random; and withal, that shall consider the uncertainty of human affairs, and that they who manage them are liable to ignorances, mistakes, incogitancies, and to the hurry of various passions as well as other men; especially that shall consider the many surprising interpositions of an overruling hand, and what innumerable varieties of paths lie open to the view and choice of an infinite mind, which we can have no apprehension of; might easily *beforehand* apprehend the vanity of attempting much in this kind, as common experience daily shows it, *afterwards:* so that multitudes of presaging thoughts, and agitations of mind, which proceed from the

supposition of the contrary, cannot be without much sin against this precept of our Lord; and which would mostly be avoided, would we once learn to lay no great stress of expectation upon anything that may be otherwise; and to reckon with that modesty which would well become us, that we can foresee nothing in the course of ordinary human affairs upon more certain terms.

iv. Here is especially forbidden such thoughtfulness as proceeds from *a secret distrust of Providence*, from a latent, lurking atheism; or,—which comes all to one as to the matter of religion,—an only Epicurean theism, that excludes the Divine presence and government:—that is, call it by the one of these names or the other, whatsoever thoughtfulness proceeds from our not having a fixed, steady, actual belief of the wise, holy, righteous, and powerful Providence that governs all affairs in the world, and particularly all our own affairs, no doubt highly offends against this law. When we have thought God out of the world, what a horrid darkness do we turn it into to ourselves! What a dismal waste and wilderness do we make it! We can have no prospect but of darkness and desolation alway before us. Did we apprehend God as everywhere present and active,—"Deum . . . . . ire per omnes terrasque tractusque maris,"—that heavens, earth, and seas, are replenished with a divine, powerful presence; were our minds possessed with the belief of his fulness filling all in all, and of governing power and wisdom extending to all times as well as places; there were neither time nor place left for undue thoughtfulness of what is or shall be.

But by a secret disbelief of Providence, or our not having a serious, fixed, lively, practical belief of it, we put ourselves into the condition of the more stupid pagans, and are not only as strangers to the commonwealth of Israel and the covenants of promise, and without Christ and hope, but even as "without God in the world," or atheists in it,—as the word there signifies.[1] And when we have thus by our

[1] Ephes. ii. 12.

own disbelief shut out God, how over-officiously do we offer ourselves to succeed into his place! And now how immense a charge have we taken upon us! We will govern the world, and order affairs and times and seasons; a province for which we are as fit as he whom the poetic fable places in the chariot of the sun: and so were it in our power, we should put all things into a combustion. But it is too much for us, that our impotency serves us to scorch ourselves and set our own souls on fire. How do our own thoughts ferment and glow within us, when we feel our inability to dispose of things, and counterwork cross events, or even shift for ourselves! For what! are we to fill up the room of God, or supply the place of an excluded Deity? No wonder if troublous thoughts multiply upon us till we cannot sustain the cumbersome burden. The context shows this to be the design of our Lord,—to possess the minds of his disciples, when he prohibits them thoughtfulness, with a serious, believing apprehension of Providence; such a Providence as reacheth to all things, even the most minute and inconsiderable; to the birds that fly in the air, the flowers that grow in men's gardens, the grass in their fields, and, elsewhere, the hairs on their own heads. And certainly, if we could but carry with us apprehensive minds of such a Providence everywhere acting, and which nothing escapes, it must exclude the thoughtfulness here intended to be forbidden.

v. Such as proceeds from an *ungovernable spirit*, a heart not enough subdued to the ruling power of God over the world. Not only distrustfulness of Providence, but rebellion against it, may be the very abundant spring of undue thoughtfulness. A temper of spirit impatient of government, self-willed, indomitable,—that says, 'I must have my own will and way, and things must be after my mind and manner,'—can never be unaccompanied with a solicitude that they may do so, as undutiful and sinful as its cause. A mind unretractably set and pre-engaged one way, cannot but be filled with tumult and mutinous thoughts upon any appearing probability that things may fall out otherwise. In reference to an afflicted,

suffering condition, how ungrateful soever it be to our flesh, a filial subjection to the Father of our spirits is required, under highest penalty. "Shall we not be subject to the Father of spirits, and live?"[1] To mutiny is mortal;—as much as to say, 'You must be subject; your life lies on it.' The title which the sacred penman there fixes on God, "The Father of spirits," is observable, and ought to be both instructive and grateful to us. He is the great Paternal Spirit. We, in respect of our spirits, "are his offspring;" as the apostle elsewhere from a heathen poet urges.[2] In this context, "the fathers of our flesh" and "the Father of spirits" are studiously contradistinguished to one another. The relation God bears to us as our Father terminates on our spirits. And his paternal care and love cannot but follow the relation, and principally terminate there too. He must be chiefly concerned about our spirits, that they may be preserved in a good and healthful state. If therefore it be requisite, for the advantage of our spirits, that our flesh do suffer, we are not to think he will stand upon that, or oppose the gratification of our flesh to the necessity of our spirits. And in this case, shall not the wisdom and authority of the Father judge and rule; and the duty of the son oblige him to submit and obey? And whereas it is added, "And live," it implies we are not upon other terms to expect a livelihood; to subsist and be maintained. A son in a plentiful, well-governed family, as long as he can be content to keep to the orders and rule of the family, and live under the care of a wise and kind father, he may live without care or taking thought; but if he will go into rebellion, he puts himself into a condition thoughtful enough. He is brought to the condition of the prodigal, that knew not what shift to make to live, till he advises with himself and comes to that wise resolution of returning: "I will arise, and go to my father." If we speak of the life of our spirits in the moral sense,—which in the natural sense we know are always immortal,—it consists, as our bodily life doth, in an *εὐκρασία*,—in that holy order and

[1] Heb. xii. 9. [2] Acts xvii. 28.

temperament which depends upon our continued union with God and keeping in with him, as the bodily *crasis* is preserved as long as the soul holds it united with itself. A holy rectitude, composure, and tranquillity, is our life,—carries with it a lively, sprightly vigour: "To be spiritually-minded is life and peace."[1] But if we refuse to submit to the order of God, and offer to break ourselves off from him, this hath a deadly tendency. It tends to dissolve the whole frame, and would end in death if sovereign, victorious grace did not prevent. To be sure, an attempt to rebel gradually discomposes our whole soul, and brings in a crowd of thoughts that will be as uncomfortable to ourselves as they are undutiful towards God, and consequently impair and enfeeble life; which our Saviour implies to consist in a good, healthy, comfortable, internal habit of mind and spirit, when he denies it to stand in externals: "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth."[2] All which inward composure and tranquillity depend upon our willing submitting to be governed. What a blessed repose and rest, how pleasant a vacancy of diseasing, vexatious thoughts, doth that soul enjoy, that hath resigned itself and gives a constant, unintermitted consent to the Divine government; when it is an agreed, undisputed thing, that God shall always lead and prescribe, and it follow and obey!

Some heathens have given us documents about following God, that might both instruct and shame us at once. It would save us many a vain and troublesome range and excursion of mind and thoughts, could we once learn constantly to do so. If upon a journey in an intricate way, full of various turnings and windings, a man have a good and sure guide before him, as long as he follows he needs not be thoughtful, or make trials here and there. But if he will outrun his guide, and take this or that by-way because it seems pleasant, he puts himself to the needless labour of coming so far back, unless he will err continually. As long as we are content that God govern the world and us, all is well.

[1] Rom. viii. 6. [2] Luke xii. 15.

vi. All such thoughtfulness is undue as proceeds from *a dislike of God's former methods in what he hath heretofore done:* when, because things have not gone so as to please us formerly, therefore we are thoughtful and afraid they may as little please us hereafter. Here the peccant cause is an aptness to censure and correct Providence,—as they * who said,*[1] "Where is the God of judgment?" We may reckon it a branch from that former root, an unsubject spirit, only shooting backward: a disposition to find fault with the paths God hath taken, as if he had made some wrong steps, or in this or that instance had mistaken his way. "But he that reproveth God, let him answer it."[2] Men are apt to fancy that things might have been better so or so. Hereupon, how do thoughts flutter and fly out to futurity! 'What if he should do to-morrow as he did yesterday—in future as in former time; what a world should we have of it!' There had been some rough, unpleasant passages even to Moses himself in the course of God's dispensation towards Israel, while they were under his conduct. But in the review of all, when he was now to leave them, how calm and pacate is his spirit; when in that most seraphic valedictory song of his,[3] his sentence upon the whole matter is, "His work is perfect; for all his ways are judgment."[4] Judgment is with us, who must argue and debate things before we determine, the most exquisite reason, or rather the perfection and final result of many foregoing reasonings: so that Moses' testimony concerning all God's ways is, that they were always chosen with that exact judgment as if he had long reasoned with himself concerning every step he took: that certainly he had a very good reason for whatever he did,—all as perfectly seen by him at one view, as if, like us, he considered long before he judged what was to be done.

Could we once learn to sing tunably the song of Moses and the Lamb, "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints:" to like well all his former methods, to admire the amiableness

[1] Mal. ii. 17. [2] Job xl. 2. [3] Deut. xxxii. [4] Ver. 4.

and beauty of Providence in everything, or generally to approve and applaud all things he hitherto hath done,—to account he hath ever gone the best way that could have been gone in all that hath past: we should never have dubious thoughts about what he will do hereafter. And this is no more than what the truth of the matter challenges from us, to esteem he hath some valuable reason for everything he hath done. For sometimes we can see the reason, and are to judge so explicitly upon what we see. And when we cannot, it is highly reasonable it should be with us the matter of an implicit belief that so it is. For though to pretend to pay that observance to fallible man must argue either insincerity or folly, the known perfection of the nature of God makes it not only safe, but our duty, to hold always that peremptory, fixed conclusion concerning all his dispensations. Indeed concerning some men of known reputed wisdom, it is not only mannerly, but prudent, to account they may see good reason for some doubtful action of theirs, when we cannot be sure they do. Much more may we confidently conclude that God ever doth and must do so. It is not a blind obsequiousness, but a manifest duty, which the plain reason of the thing exacts from us. And he justly takes himself affronted, and counts it an impious insolence, when things look not well to our judgments, then to question his; as he complains in that mentioned place,[1] "Ye have wearied me with your words. Yet ye say, Wherein have we wearied thee? When ye say, Every one that doeth evil is good in the sight of the Lord, and he delighteth in them; or, Where is the God of judgment?" But how free is that happy soul from sinful, anxious thoughts, with whom that conclusion neither is notionally denied nor doth obtain merely as a notion, but is a settled, practical, and vital principle, "He hath done all things well!"

vii. Such as proceeds from *an over-addictedness to this world*, and little relish of the things of the world to come; all that ariseth from a terrene mind, that savours not heavenly

[1] Mal. ii. 17.

things. The heart is the fountain of thoughts. From thence they arise, and receive their distinguishing tincture. They are as the temper of the heart is. If that be evil, thence are evil thoughts;[1] if it be earthly, they run upon earthly things, and savour both of it and the things they are taken up about. This was the case of the disciples.[2] When our Saviour had immediately before inquired the common opinion concerning him, and approved theirs and confirmed them in it, that he was Christ, the Son of the living God; they draw all to the favouring the too carnal imagination and inclination of their own terrene hearts. They think he cannot want power, being the Son of the living God, to do great things in the world, and make them great men; and reckon his love and kindness to them must engage the Divine power, which they saw was with him, for these purposes. And it is likely when He directs his speech to Peter, and speaks of giving him the keys,—which he might know had heretofore been the insignia of great authority in a prince's court,—he understood all of some secular greatness, and that there were dignities of the like kind which the rest might proportionably share in; as it appears others of them were not without such expectations, when elsewhere they become petitioners to sit at His right and left hand in his kingdom,—the places or thrones of those phylarchs, or princes of tribes, that sat next to the royal throne. Now hereupon, when our Saviour tells them what was first coming, and was nearer at hand,—that he must be taken from them, suffer many things, be delivered over unto death, etc.,—Peter very gravely takes on him to rebuke Him, 'Master, favour thyself; this shall not be unto thee; no, by no means!' Full of thoughts no doubt his mind was at what was said. And whence did they proceed but from a terrene spirit, and that the notion of worldly dignity had formed his mind and made it intent upon a secular kingdom? It was not abstractly his care for Christ Himself he was so much troubled at, as what would become of his own great designs and hopes. Therefore our Saviour

[1] Matt. xv. 19. [2] Matt. xvi. 22, 23.

calls him Satan, the name of that arch-enemy, the usurping god of this world, who had as yet too much power over him; and tells him, "Thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men;"—as much as to say, 'A Satanical spirit hath possessed thee, get thee behind me:' and so seeks to repress that unsavoury steam of fuliginous, earth-sprung thoughts, which He perceived arose in his mind.

It were a great felicity to be able to pass through this present state with that temper of mind, as not to be liable to vexatious disappointments. And whereas the things that compose and make up this state are both little and uncertain, so that we may as well be disappointed in having as in not having them, our way were here, not to expect; but to have our minds taken up with the things that are both sure and great,—that is heavenly, eternal things; where we are liable to disappointment neither way. For these are things that we may, upon serious, diligent seeking, both most surely obtain and possess, and most satisfyingly enjoy. And the more our minds are employed this way, the less will they incline the other; as "no man that hath tasted old wine presently desireth new, for he saith the old is better." The foretastes of heaven are mortifying towards all terrene things. No one that looks over that 11th to the Hebrews would think those worthies, those great heroes there reckoned up, troubled themselves much with thoughts of what they were to enjoy or suffer in this world. To see at what rate they lived and acted, it is easy to collect they were not much concerned about temporary futurities. Whence was it? They lived by that faith that was the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen; that exalted, raised, and refined their spirits, and carried them above an empty, unsatisfying, vain world. And again, which is most conjunct with this last,—

viii. All such thoughtfulness is forbidden as proceeds from *want of self-denial, patience, and preparedness for a suffering state.* A heart fortified and well-postured for suffering, is no

susceptible subject of those ill impressions. They fall into weak minds, tender, soft, and delicate, that reckon themselves created and embodied in flesh only to taste and enjoy sensible delights, and that they came into this world to be entertained, and divert themselves, with its still fresh and various rarities. We are deeply thoughtful because we cannot deny ourselves and bear the cross; and have not learned to endure hardship, as good soldiers of Christ Jesus. Our shoulders are not yet fitted to their burden.

Some perhaps think themselves too considerable and persons of too great value to be sufferers: 'I am too good, my rank too high, my circumstances too little vulgar.' Hence contempt, disgrace, and other more sensibly pinching hardships, are reckoned unsuitable for them, and only to be endured by persons of lower quality; so that the very thoughts of suffering are themselves unsufferable. Whereupon, when the exigency of the case urges and they can no way decline, they cannot but think strange of the fiery trial, and count a strange thing is happened to them. The matter was very unfamiliar unto their thoughts, and they are as heifers wholly unaccustomed to this yoke. And now, upon the near prospect of so frightful a spectacle as unavoidable suffering, a mighty, resistless torrent of most turbid thoughts breaks in upon them at once; and they are as a surprised camp,—all in confusion. Sorrowful, fearful, discontentful, repining, amazed thoughts do even overwhelm and deluge their souls. And all these thoughts do even proceed from want of thinking. They think too much now, because before they thought too little. Whereas, did we labour by degrees to frame our spirits to it, to reconcile our minds to a suffering state,—as they do horses intended for war, by a drum beaten under their nose, a pistol discharged or trumpet sounded at their very ear; did we inure ourselves much to think of suffering, but yet to think little and diminishingly of it, and little of ourselves who may be the sufferers: *as,* 'I am, sure, not better than those that have suffered before me in former times, such as of whom the world was not worthy;'

we should be in a good measure prepared for whatever can come, and so not be very thoughtful about anything that shall.

2. That thoughtfulness is forbidden too, *which tends to evil*, —such as hath an evil tendency.

i. Such as tends to evil negatively,—that is, *to no good;* all that is to no purpose: for we are apt, when we see things go otherwise than we would have them, to exercise our contriving thoughts as deeply as if we were at the head of affairs, and had them in our own hand and power, and could at length turn the stream this way or that. But do we not busy ourselves about matters all the while wherein we can do nothing? When things are out of our power, are not of the τὰ ἐφ' ἡμῖν, belong not to us, are without our reach, and we can have no influence upon them this way or that, yet we are prone over-earnestly to concern ourselves. And as men, in that bodily exercise, when the bowl is out of their hands, variously writhe and distort their bodies, as if they could govern its motion by those odd and ridiculous motions of theirs, so are we apt to distort our minds into uncouth shapes and postures, to as little purpose, more pernicious, and, upon a true account, not less ridiculous. As our Saviour warns us to beware of "idle words," such as can do no work,—as the Greek imports; so we should count it disallowed us too, for the same reason, to think idle thoughts. The thoughtfulness our Saviour intends to forbid, you see how he characterizes; such as will not add a cubit, not alter the case one way or other,—that is, that is every way useless to valuable or good purposes. The thinking power is not given us to be used in vain, especially whereas it might be employed about matters of great importance to us at the same time. Which serves to introduce a further character of undue thoughtfulness, namely,—

ii. Such as tends *to divert us from our present duty.* Our minds are not infinite, and cannot comprehend all things at once. We are wont so to excuse our not having attended to what another was saying to us, that truly we were thinking

on somewhat else; which is a good excuse, if neither the person nor thing deserved more regard from us. But if what was propounded were somewhat we ought to attend to, it is plain we were diverted by thinking on what at that time we ought not.

When men are so amused with their own thoughts, that they are put into a state of suspense and interruption from the proper business of their calling, as Christians or men; or when their thoughts run into confusion and are lost as to their present work, such are certainly forbidden thoughts: when they think of everything but what they should think of. A few *passant* thoughts would surely serve turn for what is not my business. I have business of my own that is constant, and must be minded at all times, be they what they will; but when the times generally do not please us, upon every less grateful emergency, we overdo it in thinking. It is rational and manly to behave ourselves in the world as those that have a concern in it, under the common Ruler of it, and for him; and not to be negligent observers how things go in reference to his great and all-comprehending interest. But the fault is, that our thoughts are apt to be too intense and run into excess; that we crowd and throng ourselves with thoughts, and think too much to think well; consider so much what others do or do not, that we allow no place or room for thoughts what we are to do ourselves, even in the way of that our constant duty which no times or state of things can alter or make dispensable;—that is, to pray continually with cheerful trust; to live in the love, fear, and service of God; to work out our own salvation; to seek the things that are above; to govern and cultivate our own spirits; to keep our hearts with all diligence; to do all the good we can to others, etc. As to these things we stand astonished, and as men that cannot find their hands. We should endeavour to range and methodize our thoughts, to reduce them into some order, (which a crowd admits not,) that we may have them distinctly applicable to the several occasions of the human and Christian life; and with which

useful order whatever consists not, we should reckon is sinful and forbidden.

iii. Such as not only *confounds* but *torments the mind* within itself; gives it inward torture, distracts and racks it, as the word in the text more peculiarly signifies,—*μεριμνᾶν*, to pluck and rend a thing in pieces, part from part, one piece from another,—such a thoughtfulness as doth tear a man's soul, and sever it from itself. There is another word, of very emphatical import too, which is used in forbidding the same evil,[1] *μὴ μετεωρίζεσθε*,—be not in suspense, do not hover as meteors, do not let your minds hang as in the air, in a pendulous, uncertain, unquiet posture; or be not of an inconsistent mind, as a critical writer phrases it;[2] or, as we may add, that agrees not, that falls out and fights with, itself; that with its own agitations sets itself on fire, as meteors are said to do. Thoughts there are that prove as firebrands to a man's soul, or as darts and arrows to his heart, that serve to no other purpose but to inflame and wound him. And when they are about *such* things—those less considerable events of to-morrow—that all this might as well have been spared, and when we disquiet ourselves in vain, it cannot be without great iniquity. God, who hath greater dominion over us than we have over ourselves, though he disquiet our spirits for great and important ends, put us to undergo much smart and torture in our own minds, cause us to be pricked to the heart, and wounded in order to our cure, and have appointed a state of torment for the incurable; yet doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men. It is a thing he wills not for itself. Those greater ends make it necessary, and put it without the compass of an indifferent choice. Much less should we choose our own torment, as it were for torment's sake, or admit thoughts which serve for no other purpose. It is undutiful, because we are not our own; we violate and discompose the temples of the Holy Ghost, where, since he vouchsafes to dwell, we should, as much as in us is, provide he may have an entirely peaceful and undisturbed

[1] Luke xii. 29. [2] Heinsius.

dwelling. It is unnatural, because it is done to ourselves,—a 'felony *de se*.' Who ever hated his own flesh? No man cuts and wounds and mangles himself, but a madman; who is then not himself, is outed and divested of himself. He must be another thing from himself ere he can do such acts of violence, even to the bodily part. How much more valuable and nearer us, and more ourself, is our mind and spirit! But this is the case in the matter of inordinate thoughts and care. We breed the worms that gnaw and corrode our hearts. Worms?—yea, the serpents, the vultures, the bears and lions. Our own fancies are the creators of what doth thus raven and prey upon ourselves. Our own creature rends and devours us.

iv. Such as *excludes Divine consolation*, so that we cannot relish the comforts God affords us to make our duties pleasant and our afflictions tolerable, or is ready to afford. "In the multitude of my thoughts within me, thy comforts delight my soul."[1] Those thoughts, if they were afflicting and troublesome, they were not so without some due measure or limit, while they did not so fill the whole soul as to exclude so needful a mixture. But how intolerably sinful a state is it, when the soul is so filled, and taken up, prepossessed already with its own black thoughts, that there is no room for better; and its self-created cloud is so thick and dark that it resists the heavenly beams and admits them not in the ordinary way to enter and insinuate; when the disease defies the remedy, and "the soul refuses to be comforted," as Ps. lxxvii. 2. This seems to have been the Psalmist's case: not that he took up an explicit, formed resolution against being comforted, but that the present habit of his mind and spirit was such that it did not enter with him, and that the usual course did not succeed in order to it; for it follows, "I thought on God, and was troubled;" which needs not to be understood so as if the thoughts of God troubled him, but though he did think of God he was yet troubled. The thoughts of God were not the cause of his trouble, but the ineffectual means of his

[1] Ps. xciv. 19.

relief. Still he was troubled; *notwithstanding* he thought of God, not *because*. For you see he was otherwise troubled, and says, "In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord." He took the course which was wont not to fail; but his mind was so full of troublous thoughts before, that when he remembered God, it proved but a weak essay. The strength of his soul was pre-engaged the other way, and the stream was too violent to be checked by that feebler breath which he now only had to oppose it. Though God can arbitrarily, and often doth, put forth that power as to break and scatter the cloud and make all clear up on a sudden; yet also, often, he withholds in some displeasure that more potent influence, and leaves things to follow, with us, their own natural course,—lets our own sin correct us and suffers us to feel the smart of our own rod. For we should have withstood beginnings, and have been more early in applying the remedy, before things had come to this ill-pass. Because we did not, when we better could, set ourselves to consider and strive and pray effectually, the distemper of our spirits is now grown to that height, that we would, and cannot. In that great distress which befell David at Ziklag, when he finds his goods rifled, his nearest relatives made captives; that city itself, the place of his repose, the solace of his exile, reduced to a ruinous heap; his guard, his friends, the companions of his flight, and partakers of all his troubles and dangers, become his most dangerous enemies, for they mutiny and conspire against him and speak of stoning him,—the common calamity imbitters their spirits, and they are ready to fly upon him, as if he had done the Amalekites' part, been the common enemy, and the author of all that mischief: in this most perplexing case he was quicker in taking the proper course; immediately turns his thoughts upwards while they were flexible and capable of being directed, and "comforted himself in the Lord his God." All that afflicting thoughtfulness which is the consequent of our neglecting seasonable endeavours to keep our minds under government and restraint, while they are yet governable, and which hereupon

renders the consolations of God small and tasteless to us, is certainly of the prohibited sort.

v. Such as *tends to put us on a sinful course for the avoiding dangers that threaten us;* when we think of sinning to-day, lest we should suffer to-morrow. If it be but one particular act of sin by which we would free ourselves from a present danger, or much more if our thoughts tempt and solicit us to a course of apostasy, which is a returning to folly,[1] the thing now speaks itself:—"The thought of foolishness is sin."[2] When, upon viewing the state of affairs, a man's thoughts shall suggest to him, 'I can never be safe, I perceive, in this way; great calamities threaten the profession I have hitherto been of:' and hence he begins to project the changing his religion, to meditate a revolt: in this case 'deliberâsse est desciviss'e.' A disloyal thought hath in it the nature of the formed evil to which it tends. Here is seminal apostasy. The cockatrice egg, long enough hatched, becomes a serpent; and therefore ought to be crushed betime. A man's heart now begins sinfully to tempt him, as he is never tempted with effect till he be led away by his own heart and enticed; and now is the conception of that sin which, being finished, is eventually mortal, and brings forth death.[3]

vi. Such as *tends unto visible dejection and despondency;* such as in the course of our walking shall make a show, and express itself to the discouragement of the friends of religion, or the triumph of its enemies. It may be read in a man's countenance many times when he is unduly thoughtful. Cares furrow his face and form his deportments. His looks, his mien, his behaviour, show a thoughtful sadness.

Now when such appearances exceed our remaining constant cause of visible cheerfulness, the thoughtfulness whence they proceed cannot but be undue and sinful. As when the ill aspect of affairs on our interest clothes our faces with fear and sorrow; our countenances are fallen, and speak our hearts sunk, so that we even tell the world we despair of our cause

[1] Ps. lxxxv. 8. [2] Prov. xxiv. 9. [3] James i. 14, 15.

and our God: this, besides the distrust which is the internal evil cause spoken of before, tends to a very pernicious effect,—to confirm the atheistical world, to give them the day, to say with them the same thing, and yield them the matter of their impious boast, "There is no help for them in God;" and all this, when there is a true, unchangeable reason for the contrary temper and deportment! For still that one thing, "The Lord reigneth," hath more in it to fortify and strengthen our hearts and compose us to cheerfulness, and ought to signify more with us to this purpose, than all the ill appearances of things in this world can do to our rational dejection. The psalmist reckons all the world should ring of it, that the whole creation should partake from it a diffusive joy: "Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof. Let the field be joyful, and all that is therein: then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice before the Lord; for he cometh, for he cometh to judge the earth,"[1] etc. He accounts all the universe should even be clothed hereupon with a smiling verdure. And what! are we only to except ourselves, and be an anomalous sort of creatures? Shall we not partake in that common dutiful joy, and fall into concert with the adoring loyal chorus? Will we cut ourselves off from this gladsome obsequious throng? And what should put a pleasant face and aspect upon the whole world,—shall it only leave our faces covered with clouds and a mournful sadness?

Briefly, that we may sum up the evil of this prohibited thoughtfulness, as it is to be estimated from its ill effects to which it tends, whatsoever in that kind hath a tendency either dishonourable and injurious to God, or hurtful to ourselves, we are to reckon into this class, and count it forbidden us. Wherefore it remains that we go on to the other part of the intended discourse, namely,—

The ENFORCEMENT of the prohibition. For which purpose we shall take into consideration the following part of the verse: "To-morrow shall take thought for the things of itself; sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." The evil

[1] Ps. xcvi. 11–13.

forbidden is carefulness about the future; as we read it, "taking thought;" which is a more general expression than the Greek word doth amount to. All thinking is not caring. This is one special sort of thoughts that is here forbidden, careful thoughts; and one special sort of care, not about duty, but event,—and about event wherein it doth not depend upon our duty; that is, considered abstractly from it: and so the thing intended is, that doing all that lies within the compass of our duty to promote any good event or to hinder bad, that then we should cease from solicitude about the success; from such solicitude, most especially, as shall be either distrustful or disquieting; or more generally, that shall be any way either injurious to God or prejudicial to ourselves.

Now for the pressing of this matter upon our practice, these subjoined words may be apprehended to carry either but one and the same argument in both the clauses, or else two distinct ones, according as the former shall be diversely understood.

For these words, "To-morrow shall take care for the things of itself," are understood by some to carry but this sense with them, to wit, 'To-morrow will bring its own cares with it, and those perhaps afflicting enough, and which will give you sufficient trouble when the day comes—To-morrow will oblige you to be careful about the things thereof, and find you business and molestation enough:' which is but the same thing in sense with what is imported in the following words, "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."

Or else those former words may be understood thus,—"To-morrow shall take care for the things of itself;" that is, 'To-morrow and the things of to-morrow shall be sufficiently cared for otherwise, without your previous care. There is One that can do it sufficiently; do not you impertinently and to no purpose concern yourselves.' It is implied there is some one else to take that care, whose proper business it is. The great God himself is meant, though that is not expressly said,—the design being but to exclude us, and to say who

should not take care, not who should. That is therefore left at large, and expressed with that indifferency as if it were intended to signify to us that it was no matter who took care, so we did not; that we should rather leave it to the morrow to put on a *person* and take care, than be ourselves concerned; that whose part soever it is, it was none of ours: a form of speech not unexampled elsewhere in Scripture: "Let the dead bury their dead, only follow thou me;" as much as to say, 'Sure somebody will perform that part; it will be done by one or other, more properly than by you, who have devoted yourself to me, and are become a sacred person:' not permitted by the law to meddle with a dead body,—as a learned person glosses upon that place. And in common speech, especially of superiors to inferiors, such *antanaclases*, as the figure is called, are frequent; and the same word used over again, when in the repetition (though here it be otherwise) we intend not any certain sense, more than that we would with the more smartness and pungency repress an inclination we observe in them to somewhat we would not have them do, or more earnestly press the thing we would have done. So that we need not in that expression trouble ourselves to imagine any such mystical meaning as 'Let them that are dead in sin bury them that are dead for sin;' or that it intends more than, 'Be not concerned about that matter.' And to show the absoluteness of the command, it is given in that form of words, that it might be understood he should not concern himself about that business in any case whatsoever;—as much as to say, 'Suppose, what is not likely, that there were none else that would take care, or none but the dead to bury the dead; yet know that at this time I have somewhat else for you to do:' when it is in the meantime tacitly supposed and concealed that the matter might well enough be left to the care of others. So here, while it is silently intimated that the things of the morrow shall be otherwise sufficiently cared for by that wise and mighty Providence that governs all things and runs through all time, yet our intemperate solicitude is in the meantime so absolutely forbidden, that we

are not to be allowed in it, though there were none but the feigned person of to-morrow, to take care for what should then occur: yet the main stress is laid upon the concealed intimation all the while, as a thing whereof He was secure, and would have his disciples be too, that the business of providing for the morrow would be done sufficiently without them.

And now, according to this sense of those words, there are two distinct considerations contained in this latter part of the verse, both which we shall severally make use of, for the purpose for which they are propounded by our Saviour, namely, the pressing of what he had enjoined in the former part of the verse. And we may thus distinctly entitle them, the *unprofitableness* and the *hurtfulness* of this forbidden care:—

First, The former may well bear that title,—the inutility or *unprofitableness* of our care. "To-morrow shall take care for the things of itself;" that is, 'They shall be sufficiently cared for without you.' Now, under that head of unprofitableness we may conceive these two things to be comprehended,—namely, that we do not need to attempt anything, and that we can effect nothing, by that prohibited care of ours; that we neither need nor to any purpose can concern ourselves about such matters:—

I. That we do not *need*. They are under the direction of His providence who can manage them well enough himself. And unto this head several things do belong, which, if they be distinctly considered, will both discover and highly aggravate that offence of immoderate thoughtfulness; as,—

1. That, through that needless care of ours, *we shall but neglect*, as was formerly said, *our most constant, indispensable duty*. That will not be done as it ought. We should study to be quiet, and do our own business, as is elsewhere enjoined upon another account. We have a duty incumbent, which what it is we are told in the general, and at the same time encouraged against interrupting care: "Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou

shalt be fed."[1] Some, perhaps, are apt to have many a careful thought of this sort: 'Alas! we are afraid the condition of the land may be such as we shall not be able to live in it.' 'No,' it is said, 'never trouble your thoughts about that; only neglect not your own part. Trust in the Lord, and do good, and it will be well enough. You shall dwell in the land, and verily you shall be fed.'

2. We shall make ourselves *busybodies in the matters of another;*[2] as it were, play the bishops in another's diocese, as the word there imports. We shall but be over-officious and indecently pragmatical in intermeddling. Our great care should be, when we count upon suffering, that we may not suffer indecently or with disreputation, in their account who are fittest to judge, much less injuriously to a good cause and a good conscience; which we cannot fail to do, if we suffer out of our own place and station, and having intruded ourselves into the affairs and concerns that belong to the management of another hand. And,—

3. It is to be considered *who it is* that we shall affront, and whose province we invade in so doing; namely, of one that can well enough manage all the affairs of to-morrow and of all future time; the Lord of all time, in whose hands all our times are, and all time,—a province in the administration whereof there is no danger of defect or error. And,—

4. It is to be considered that we shall do so, *not only without a call, but against a prohibition.* It is reckoned among men a rudeness to intrude into the affairs of another uninvited;—how much more if forbidden! It gives distaste and offence: and the reason is plain, for it implies a supposition of their weakness, and that they are not able to manage their own affairs themselves. And as we thereby cast contempt upon another, so, at the same time, we unduly exalt and magnify ourselves, as if we understood better. Such a comparison cannot but be thought odious. But now take this as an addition to the former consideration, and the matter rises high, and carries the same intimation with it in reference to

[1] Ps. xxxvii. 3. [2] 1 Pet. iv. 15.

the all-wise and almighty God. No! Is not he likely to bring matters to any good pass without us? And are we therefore so concernedly looking over the shoulder, thrusting in our eye, and sending forth our cares to run and range into his affairs and business? This is a wearisome impertinence. A prudent man would not endure it.

Nor are those words inapplicable to this purpose, "Is it a small thing for you to weary men, but will ye weary my God also?"[1] They were spoken to a purpose not unlike. For observe the occasion. There were at that time the two kings with their combined power, of Syria and Israel, come up against Jerusalem and the house of David,—meaning the king Ahaz. It is said hereupon of him, and the people with him, "Their hearts were moved, as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind." Full of thoughts, of cares, and fears they were, no doubt. 'Oh, what will become of this matter? what will be the event?' And the prophet comes with a comfortable message to them from God. But their hearts were so prepossessed with their own fears, it signifies nothing. A confirmation is offered, and refused. The pretence was, he would not tempt God by asking a sign, even when he was bidden;—a hypocritical pretence, made only to cover a latent distrust. Thereupon saith the prophet, "Is it a small thing to weary men," (meaning himself, who was but the messenger,) "but that you will weary my God also?"—that is, who sent him, and who went not about to put the affrighted prince and his people upon anything but to trust Him and be quiet; no agitation of whose minds was required to their safety. They are not directed, as if all lay upon them, to hold a council, and contrive themselves, at this time, the means of their preservation; nor should they, with disturbed minds. Neither are we, in the sense that hath been given, required or allowed to use our care in reference to the things of to-morrow. The stress of affairs lies not upon us. The events that belong to to-morrow or the future time, whatever it be, will be brought about, whether we so care or care not.

[1] Isa. vii. 13.

Our anxiety is needless in the case. What! will not to-morrow come, and carry all its events in it that belong to it, without us? Will not the heavens roll without us, and the sun rise and set; the evening come, and also the morn; the days, and all that belongs to the several days of succeeding time? Will not all be brought about without our care, think we? How was it before we were born?

II. There is also comprehended besides, under that head of unprofitableness, our *impotency* to effect anything by our care. As we do not need, so nor are we able. That is unprofitable which will not serve turn, nor do our business. This forbidden care leaves things but as we found them. It is true that may be some way useful that is not absolutely necessary; but if besides that no necessity, there be also an absolute uselessness, the argument is much stronger. All this prohibited care of ours cannot contribute anything to the hindering of bad events or promoting of good; and that neither as to our own private affairs, nor much less as to those that are of public concernment:—

1. Not as to our own private affairs, which the series of our Saviour's discourse hath directer reference unto;—what we shall eat and drink, and how be clothed; how to maintain and support life, and add to our days and the comfort of them. We cannot add, it is said, so much as "one cubit to our stature."[1] So we read that word, which perhaps, by the way, as a noted expositor observes, may better be read 'age.' The word signifies both. It would seem, indeed, something an enormous addition, to have a cubit added to the stature of a grown man; but the same word (ἡλικία) signifying also 'age,' that seems here the fitter translation;—as much as to say, 'Which of you, by taking thought, can make the least addition to his own time?' Nor is it unusual to speak of measures of that kind in relation to time,—as, a span, a hand-breadth, and the like. And so is 'cubit' as capable of the same application. Our anxiety can neither add more nor less.

[1] Matt. vi. 27.

2. Much less can it influence the common and public affairs. Our solicitude what will become of these things; how shall the Christian or Protestant interest subsist, much more how shall it ever come to thrive and prosper in the world, so low, so depressed and despised as it may seem; how will it be with it to-morrow, or hereafter in future time;—what doth it contribute? I speak not to the exclusion of prayer, nor of a dutiful, affectionate concernedness that excludes not a cheerful, submissive trust; and what will more than this avail? If we add more, will that addition mend the matter? Or do we indeed think, when the doing of our duty prevails not, that our anxiety and care beyond our duty shall? Can that change times and seasons, and mend the state of things to-morrow or the next day? Will to-morrow become by means of it a fairer or a calmer day, or be without it a more stormy one? We might as well think, by our care, to order the celestial motions, to govern the tides, and retard or hasten the ebbs and floods; or by our breath check and countermand the course of the greatest rivers. We, indeed, and all things that time contains and measures, are carried as in a swift stream or on rapid floods. And a man at sea might as well attempt, by thrusting or pulling the sides of the ship that carries him, to hasten or slacken its motion, as we, by our vexatious care, to check or alter the motions of Providence this way or that. Do we think to posture things otherwise than God hath done? Will we move the earth from its centre? Where will we find another earth whereon to set our foot?

Secondly, We have to consider not only the unprofitableness but *hurtfulness* of this forbidden care. It not only doth no good, but it is sure to do us a great deal of harm. That is the consideration intimated in the latter words, "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." We shall but accumulate evils unto ourselves by it, to no purpose. Our undue solicitude cannot add to our time or comforts, as was said; but it may much diminish and detract from them. Whereas every several day that passeth may have enough in it, and

be of itself sufficiently fraught with perplexity, trouble, and sorrow; all that, added to the foregoing burden of excessively careful forethoughts, may overwhelm and sink us.

There are sundry particular considerations that fall in here also:—

1. That by this means *we shall suffer the same thing over and over*, which we needed not suffer more than once. It obtained for a proverb among the Arabians, "An affliction is but one to him that suffers it; but to him that with fear expects it, double."[1] I shall suffer the evil of to-morrow, this day, and to-morrow too. Yea, and by this course, I may bring all the evil of all my future time into each several day, and may suffer the same affliction a thousand times over, which the benignity of Providence meant only for my present exercise, when he should think it most fit and seasonable to lay it on.

2. I may by this means suffer, *in my own foreboding imagination, many things that really I shall never suffer at all*, for the events may never happen the forethoughts whereof do now afflict me. And what a foolish thing is it to be troubled beforehand at that which, for aught I know, will never be; and to make a certain evil of an uncertain!

3. And it is further to be considered, that *all the trouble I suffer in this kind is self-trouble*. We therein but afflict ourselves. And it adds a great sting to affliction that I am the author of it to myself. For besides the unnaturalness of being a self-tormentor, which was formerly noted, it is the more afflicting upon review, by how much more easily it was avoidable. We are stung with the reflection on our own folly, as any man is apt to be when he considers his having run himself into trouble, which by an ordinary prudence, he might have escaped. With what regret may one look back upon many by-past days wherein I might have served God with cheerfulness in my calling,—"walking in the light of the Lord,"—which I have turned into days of pensive darkness to

[1] The Collection of Arabian Proverbs, illustrated by the notes of Jos. Scalig. and Erpen.

myself, by only my own black and dismal thoughts! And so, by having drawn unjustly the evils of future time into my present day, I come to draw justly the evils of my former time, and of a worse kind, into it also. What God inflicts I cannot avoid, but am patiently to submit to it; which carries its own relief in it: but I owe no such patience to myself, for having foolishly been my own afflicter with needless and avoidable trouble.

4. I shall suffer hereby in a more grievous kind than *if only the feared evil* had actually befallen me; it being the nature of external evils, which the prohibited thoughtfulness chiefly refers to, that they commonly afflict more in expectation than in the actual suffering of them, as was a wise heathen's observation; as external good things please more in the expectation than they do in the fruition: when, as he also observes, as to the good and evil things of the contrary kind the case is contrary. And how often do we find those evils in the *bearing*, light, and to have little in them, that looked big, seemed formidable, and carried a dreadful appearance with them at a distance! What a fearful thing is poverty to man's imagination, and yet who live merrier lives than beggars? We, therefore, by this anticipation, suffer in a worse kind. And if we do not make an affliction of no affliction, we make of a lighter one a more grievous. We turn a future outward affliction into a present inward and mental one. The affliction of forbidden care falls upon the mind; whereas the object of that care, is only an affliction to the outward man. How much more of suffering is an intelligent spirit capable of, than a mere lump of animated flesh or clay! Can my body ever feel so much as my soul can? Pleasure and pain are alway commensurate to the principles of life, by which we are capable of the one or the other. How unspeakably greater are the pleasures of the mind than those of the body! and so, consequently, are mental afflictions than corporal. The providence of God, it may be, intends some affliction to our outer man to-morrow; but, in the meantime, our expectations and anxious thoughts are

torturing our spirits to-day, while perhaps we have burden enough otherwise.

5. And as the affliction of anxious forethought and care is more grievous in the kind, *so it is likely to be very intense in the degree of that kind*, beyond what the other sort of affliction may be. For whereas the other may be more directly from God, and this, as was said, from myself; God afflicts with wisdom, mercy, and moderation; but this self-affliction proceeds from the want of prudence, and is without mercy, so that the moderating principles are wanting. Men commonly know no limit or measure in their thus afflicting themselves,—never think it enough. Their own passions are their tormentors; which, having broke loose from under the government of their reason and prudence, run into wild rage and fury. What a misery is it to have such fierce creatures preying upon us! God would never use us so unmercifully as we do ourselves. Or, if he suffer wicked men to be our afflicters, that know no pity, they cannot reach our spirits; and his mercy towards us is still the same. He can restrain or overrule them at pleasure, or infuse such consolations as, when we are thus afflicting ourselves, we cannot expect, and which that self-affliction doth naturally exclude. It is inconceivable what evils we superadd to our own days, beyond that which he counts sufficient. Nor do we design our own good in it, as he doth when he afflicts; which design and end measure and limit the means, that they may not exceed the proportion requisite thereto.

6. All this superadded evil we bring upon ourselves *against a rule*, which is fit to be again noted; for both the considerations that are subjoined must be considered as relative to the precept. We break first the law, before we break our own peace. Our Redeemer and Lord hath interposed his authority as a bar against our troubling ourselves, and so fenced our peace and comfort for us that we have no way to come at our own trouble but by breaking through the boundary of this law. This, then, is a very pestilent addition to the evil of *this day*, that we draw upon ourselves, by our

taking thought for *to-morrow*. For we mingle the evil of sin with that of affliction. We deal very ill with ourselves in this, to taint our affliction with so foul a thing, which might have been mere affliction, without that imbittering, accursed mixture.

And it is to be considered that this draws a consequence with it, besides the depraving nature of sin, and the corroding nature especially of this sin;—it is, *as it is sin*, punishable. And so, as we bring the evil of to-morrow into this day, we may bring the evil of this day into to-morrow. God may be offended, and frown *to-morrow*, because we were no more apt to be governed by him *to-day*. And as we drew an imaginary cloud from the next day into this, it may the next return upon us in a real storm. But whether it be so or no, it highly aggravates the matter that,—

7. We herein offend, not only against *the justice of the law*, but against the mercy of it,—the kindness, goodness, and compassion imported in it. This, as it was intimated before, so needs to be more deeply considered by itself. It ought, indeed, to be acknowledged, concerning the general frame and system of all the Divine laws, that they are visibly, and with admirable suitableness, contrived for the good and felicity of mankind, and seem but obligations upon us to be happy: such as in the keeping whereof there is great reward.[1] And in this particular one, how observably hath our Lord, as it were, studied our quiet and the repose of our minds! How especially doth the benignity and kindness of the holy Lawgiver appear in it, upon comparing this consideration with the precept itself: "Take no thought for to-morrow; sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof;"—as much as to say, 'I would not have you over-burdened; I would have you be without care.' It imports a tenderness of our present comfort, which he many other ways expresses of our future safety and blessedness; as much as to say, 'I would have you go comfortably through this world, where you are in a pilgrimage and a wayfaring condition; I would not

[1] Ps. xix. 11.

have you oppressed, nor your spirits bowed down with too heavy a burden.' And it is elsewhere inculcated: "Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you."[1] "In nothing be careful; but in all things, let your requests be made known to God with thanksgiving: and the peace of God," (so it immediately follows,) "which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds."[2] "Commit thy way unto the Lord,"—devolve it on him, as the word signifies; "trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass."[3] If we be so wise as to observe his rule and design, we shall be wise for ourselves. And that tranquillity and calmness of spirit, which many heathens have so highly magnified and which their philosophy sought, our religion will possess and enjoy. But if we neglect and disregard him herein, we shall bring an evil into to-day that neither belongs to this day nor to any other. It is true, indeed, God doth often point us out the day wherein we must suffer such and such external evils, and as it were say to us, 'Now is your day of suffering:' sometimes by his providence alone, when I have no way of escape; sometimes by the concurrence of his word and providence, when the one hems me in on the one hand, the other on the other. He hath now set me a day for suffering in this or that kind, but none for sinning in this kind, nor in any other. Why shall I draw in evils to this day from to-morrow, that belong neither to this day nor to-morrow?

The sum is, Whether we regard our innocency or our peace; whether we would express reverence to God or a due regard to ourselves; if we would do the part either of pious and religious, or of rational and prudent men, we are to lay a restraint upon ourselves in this matter. Have we nothing to employ our thoughts about that concerns us more; nothing wherein we may use them to better purpose? Is there nothing wherein we are more left at liberty, or nothing about which we are more bound in duty to think? Unless we reckon that thoughts are absolutely free, and that we may use our thinking power as we please, and that the

[1] 1 Pet. v. 7. [2] Phil. iv. 6. [3] Ps. xxxvii. 5.

Divine government doth not extend to our minds,—which if it do not, we confound God's government and man's, and there is an end of all internal sin and duty, and of the first and most radical differences of moral good and evil,—we can never justify ourselves in such a range of thoughts and cares as this we have been speaking of. And it is very unreasonable to continue a course we cannot justify. A transient action done against a formed judgment would be reflected on with regret and shame, by such as are not arrived to that pitch as not to care what they do. But to persist in a condemned course of actions, must much more argue a profligate conscience, enfeebled and mortified to that degree as to have little sense left of right and wrong. Where it is so, somewhat else is requisite to a cure than mere representing the evil of that course. What that can do hath been tried already. And when men have been once used to victory over their own judgments and consciences, every former defeat makes the next the easier, till at length light and conscience become such contemptible, baffled things, as to signify nothing at all to the governing of practice this way or that.

The only thing that can work a redress is to get the temper of our spirits cured; which will mightily facilitate the work and business of conscience, and is necessary, even where it is most lively and vigorous. For to be only quick at discerning what we should be and do, signifies little against a disinclined heart. Therefore, for the rectifying of that, and that our inclinations as well as our judgments may concur and fall in with our duty in this matter, I will only recommend in order hereto, by way of direction, (among many that might be thought on,) these two things:—

1. That we use more earnest *endeavour to be habitually under government, in reference to our thoughts and the inward workings of our spirits.* For can we doubt of the obligation of the many precepts that concern immediately the inner man; to love, to trust, to fear, to rejoice in God? etc. What becomes of all religion, if the vital principles of it be thought

unnecessary? Do not all the laws of God that enjoin us any duty, lay their first obligation upon our inward man? Or, do they only oblige us to be hypocrites, and to seem what we are not? And why do we here distinguish, and think that by some precepts God intends to oblige us, and by others he means no such thing, but to leave us to our liberty? Or, would not those which we will confess more indispensable,—namely, such as have been instanced in,—exclude the careful thoughts we speak of about the events of to-morrow? For can a heart much conversant in the explicit acts of love to God, trust in him, the fear of him, etc., be much liable to these forbidden cares?

Nor, surely, can it be matter of doubt with us whether God observe the thoughts and motions of our souls. For can we think that he will give rules about things wherein he will exercise no judgment? "The Lord knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are vanity;"[1]—and are any more vain than these? Do we Christians need a heathen instructor to tell us, 'We ought always so to live as under view, and so to think as if there were some one that may and can inspect and look into our innermost breast! To what purpose is it that we keep anything secret from man? nothing is shut up to God: he is amidst our minds, and comes among our most inward thoughts?"[2] Let us labour to accustom and use our spirits to subjection, to have them composed and formed to awful apprehensions of that authority and government which the Father of spirits claims, and hath established immediately over themselves. This, though it be more general, will yet reach this case.

2. That we aim at being, in the temper of our spirits, *more indifferent about all future events that lie within the compass of time*. Let us not account them so very considerable. Time will soon be over, and is too narrow a sphere for us to confine our minds unto. We should endeavour a greater amplitude of thoughts; as he that hath large and noble designs looks with great indifference upon smaller matters

[1] Ps. xciv. 11. [2] Seneca.

wherein they are not concerned. One that fears God and works righteousness, believes a world to come, and lives in entire devotedness to the Redeemer,—the constitution of whose kingdom relates entirely to that other world,—hath little cause to concern himself about interveniencies which, as to his part in that world, will not alter his case. We are not the surer of heaven, if the sun shine out to-morrow; nor the less sure, if it shine not.

For the obtaining of this dutiful and peaceful indifferency, it concerns us to be much in prayer. For both that happy temper of mind is part of the wisdom which, if we want, we are to ask of God,[1] and it directly eases us of the burden of our affairs, to commit them in that way; as is signified in that mentioned scripture.[2] Nor was anything more agreeable than that our Lord, teaching us, in that admirable summary of petitions given in this same sermon on the mount, to pray every day for our daily bread, should here forbid us to take thought for the morrow: as also, in the gathering of manna, no care was to be extended further than the present day.[3] We have easy access daily. Story tells us the poor Chinese could not enter into the presence of their Tartarian prince, with never so just a complaint, without submitting first to a hundred bastinadoes, as the condition of their admittance: would we thankfully accept, and use as we might, the constant liberty we have upon the easiest terms, how much would it contribute both to our innocency and quiet!

[1] James i. 5. [2] Phil. iv. 6.

[3] Both which remarks are noted by some expositors.

AN

APPENDIX TO THE FOREGOING DISCOURSE,

CONCERNING THE

IMMODERATE DESIRE OF KNOWING THINGS TO COME.

THERE is yet another very vicious habit of mind, besides this of taking thought about the events of future time,—namely, an intemperate appetite of foreknowing them; which hath such affinity, and lies so contiguous and bordering to the former, that it will not be incongruous to add somewhat concerning it; and which is of so ill and pernicious an import, that it will deserve some endeavour to show how we may discern and repress it. And it may be requisite to discourse somewhat to this purpose, both for the vindication of God's wisdom and goodness in confining our knowledge of the events of future time within so narrow bounds and limits; and that serious Christians may the more effectually consult the ease and quiet of their own minds, by keeping themselves contentedly, as to this matter, within the bounds which He hath set them.

This appetite of foreknowing is only to be animadverted on, so far as it is inordinate and a distemper. Our business therefore here must be, to *specify and distinguish this distemper*, and *to offer somewhat for the cure of it.*

I. For the finding out and specifying of it. It is not to be doubted but there may be a faultiness in the *defect*,—a too great listlessness, and indisposition to look forward: which indisposition will appear blameable, when it proceeds either,—

1. From a *sensual slothfulness* of temper, that addicts us wholly to the present. It is too much akin to the beast, to be totally taken up with what now pleases. When all the soul lies in the senses and we mind nothing but the grateful relishes of our present and private enjoyments; are quite unconcerned about the state of the world or the Christian interest, or what shall hereafter come of the affairs of our country, in civil or religious respects; when we are held in a lazy indifferency concerning the state of things in succeeding times and ages; are conscious of no desire of any hopeful prospect for posterity and those that shall come after us; it is all one with us whether we know them likely to be civil or barbarian, Christian or Pagan, freemen or slaves, because we care not which of these we be ourselves, so we can but eat on, and enjoy our own undisturbed ease and pleasure;—this is a fatal mortification of the appetite of foreknowing; for it destroys it quite, when it should but rectify and reduce it within true bounds. And in what degree that or any other inclination ought to die, it much imports what kills it; because that which doth so, succeeds into the dominion and hath all the power in me which it before had. And surely no worse thing can rule over me than a sensual spirit, that binds me down and limits me to this spot of earth and point of time. Or if it proceed,—

2. From a *weak and childish dread of all futurity*,—as children apprehend nothing but bugbears, and hobgoblins, and frightful images and appearances, in the dark,—this ill disposition is very intimately conjunct with the former, when a sensual mind, finding itself already well entertained with the gratifications of the present time, cleaves to it, and every thought of a change is mortal. It is death to admit the apprehension of a new scene. It is as true, indeed, that the same temper of mind in more ungrateful present circumstances, runs all into discontent and affectation of change; as will be further shown hereafter in the proper place. But in this region of changes, it is most imprudent and incongruous to let the mind be unchangeably fixed upon any external

state and posture of things, or irreconcilably averse to any. It is becoming, it is laudable and glorious, with a manly and a truly Christian fortitude, to dare to face futurity, how formidably soever anything within the compass of time may look. For, certainly, so far as we ought to be mortified to the knowledge of future things, it ought to proceed from some better principle than only our being afraid to know them.

But that distemper of mind which is now more principally to be noted and reproved, lies rather in the *excess*. That, therefore, it may be distinctly characterized and understood, I shall endeavour to show when this appetite of foreknowing the events of future time is not to be thought excessive, or how far a disposition to inquire into such matters is allowable and fit; and when, by its excess, it doth degenerate into a distemper, so as to become the just matter of reprehension and redress.

1. Therefore, on the negative part, we are not to think it disallowed us, yea, it cannot but be our duty, to have a well-proportioned desire of understanding so much of future event as God hath thought fit to reveal in his word; as he hath there foretold very great things concerning the state of the Christian church and interest to the end of the world: which predictions it cannot be supposed are made public and offered to our view to be neglected and overlooked. Only we must take care that our endeavour to understand them, and the time and labour we employ therein, be commensurate to the circumstances of our condition,—to our ability and advantage for such more difficult disquisitions,—and be duly proportioned between them and other things that may be of equal or greater moment to us.

Nor, again, is it liable to exception, if we only desire to make a right use of other additional indications and presages also, whether they belong to the moral, natural, or political world; or, if any such should be afforded, to the more peculiar sphere of extraordinary and immediate Divine revelation:—

i. It is not only innocent, but commendable, to endeavour the making a due improvement of moral prognostics; or to consider what we are to hope or fear from the increase and growth of virtue or vice in the time wherein we live. And herein we may fitly guide our estimate by what we find promised, or threatened, or historically recorded, in the Holy Scriptures, or other certain history, in reference to like cases. Only, because God may sometimes arbitrarily vary his methods, and the express application of such promises, threatenings, and histories to our times, is not in Scripture, we should not be too positive in making it.

ii. The like may be said of such unusual phenomena as fall out within the sphere, but besides the common course, of nature: as comets, or whatever else is wont to be reckoned portentous: the total neglect of which things, I conceive, neither agrees with the religious reverence which we owe to the Ruler of the world, nor with common reason and prudence.

It belongs not to the present design, as to comets particularly, to discourse the philosophy of them. Their relation to our earth, as meteors raised from it, is a fancy that seems deservedly exploded; but it seems to require great hardiness to deny they have any relation as tokens. Their distance from us may well argue the former. But the constant luminaries of heaven, that in other kinds continually serve us, might, by their distance, most of them be thought quite unrelated to us as well as they. And if we should suppose all or most of those usual luminaries primarily made for some other nobler use, that makes not the constant benefit we have by them less in itself. The like may be thought of the use which these more extraordinary ones may be of to us, in a diverse kind, that they should cause what they are thought to signify. I understand not, nor am solicitous how they are themselves caused; let that be as naturally as can be supposed,—of the rejected effluvia of other heavenly bodies, or by the never so regular collection of whatsoever other celestial matter,—that hinders not their being signs to us, more than

the natural causation of the bow in the clouds; though that, being an appropriate sign for a determinate purpose, its signification cannot but be more certain. And if we should err in supposing them to signify anything of future event to us at all, and that error only lead us into more seriousness, and a more prepared temper of mind for such trouble as may be upon the earth; it will, sure, be a less dangerous error than that on the other hand would be, if we should err in thinking them to signify nothing, and be thereby made the more supine and secure, and more liable to be surprised by the calamities that shall ensue: besides, that we shall be the less excusable in departing from the judgment of all former times and ages upon no certainty of being more in the right. And why should we think such things should serve us for no other purpose than only to gratify our curiosity, or furnish us with matter of wonder, invite us to gaze and admire? when, as an ancient well observes, 'Things known to all in the common course of nature are not less wonderful, and would be amazing to all that consider them, if men were not wont to admire only things that are rare.'[1] It is neither fit, indeed, we should be very particular or confident in our interpretations and expectations upon such occasions, or let our minds run out in exorbitant emotions, as will be further shown in the positive account which is intended of this sort of distemper; but I conceive it is very safe to suppose that some very considerable thing, either in a way of judgment or mercy, may ensue, according as the cry of persevering wickedness or of penitential prayer is more or less loud at that time.

iii. There are, again, very strange and extraordinary aspects of Providence that sometimes offer themselves to our notice in the course of human affairs and in the political world, where God presides over rational and free agents. And these also must be allowed to have their signification of what is likely to be future. For, otherwise, if we were to reckon they imported nothing either of good or evil (so much as probable) to be expected from them, we should be to blame

[1] August. *De Civit. Dei*, lib. xxi. c. 8.

if our minds should admit any impression from them either of hope or fear,—which both refer to the future,—though in never so moderate a degree; and should be obliged to put on an absolute stoicism in reference to whatsoever may occur, beyond what human nature is capable of; and which would have more in it of stupidity than prudence, or any human or Christian virtue. When therefore the face of Providence seems more manifestly threatening, clouds gather, all things conspire to infer a common calamity, and all means and methods of prevention are from time to time frustrated,—if we so far allow ourselves to think it approaching, as that we are hereby excited to prayer, repentance, and the reforming our lives, this, sure, is better than a regardless, drowsy slumber.

And again, if, in order to our preservation from a present utter ruin, there fall out, in a continual succession, many strange and wonderful things which we looked not for, without which we had been swallowed up quick; we be hereupon encouraged unto trust and dependence upon God, and the hope we shall be preserved from being at length quite destroyed, whatever present calamities may befall us; and be the more fortified in our resolution not to forsake him, whatsoever shall: this seems no immodest or irrational construction and use of such providences.

Yea, and at any time, when there is no very extraordinary appearance of a divine hand in the conduct of affairs, it unbecomes us not to use our reason and prudence, in judging by their visible posture and tendency as they lie under human management, what is like to ensue upon supposition the overruling Providence do not interpose to hinder or alter their course,—as we find they often run on long in one current without any such more remarkable interposition: only we are to be very wary lest we be peremptory in concluding, or put more value than is meet upon our own judgment, as was noted before; both because we know not when or how a divine hand may interpose, and may be ignorant of many matters of fact upon which a true judgment of their natural

tendency may depend; and our ability to judge, upon what is in view, may be short and defective. Others, that have more power, and can do more, may also have much more prudence, and can discern better. But, observing such limitations, it is fit we should use to this purpose that measure of understanding which God hath given us. In what part of the world soever he assigns us our station, we are to consider he hath made us reasonable creatures, and that we owe to him what interest we have in the country where we live. And therefore, as we are not to affect the knowledge which belongs not to us, so nor are we to renounce the knowledge which we have,—to abandon our eyes, and be led on as brutes or blind men; but to endeavour, according as we have opportunity, to see where we are and whither we are going, that we may know accordingly how to govern our spirits, and aim to get a temper of mind suitable to what may be the state of our case. And, for aught we know, this may be all the prophecy we shall have to guide us: as it was the celebrated saying of a Greek poet, quoted by divers of the sager heathens, 'He is the best prophet that conjectures best.' Nor is it so reasonable to expect that, in plain cases, which do ordinarily happen, God should by any extraordinary means give us notice of what is to fall out.

iv. But we are not suddenly to reject any premonitions of that kind that appear to deserve our regard, if there be any such. It is indeed a part of prudence not too hastily to embrace, or lay much stress upon, modern prophecies; but I see not how it can be concluded, that because God hath of latter time been more sparing as to such communications, that therefore prophecy is so absolutely ceased that he will never more give men intimations of his mind and purposes that way. He hath never said it; nor can it be known by ordinary means. Therefore for any to say it, were to pretend to prophesy, even while they say prophecy is ceased.

The superstition of the vulgar pagans was, indeed, greatly imposed upon by the pretence of divination; but among their more ancient philosophers none ever denied the thing,

except Xenophanes and Epicurus, as Cicero[1] and Plutarch[2] inform us; and concerning the latter, Laërtius.[3] It seems he did it over and over; and, indeed, it well agreed with his principles about the Deity to do so. Cicero himself, after large discourse upon the subject, leaves at last the matter doubtful, according to the manner of the Academy, which he professes to imitate. Yet a great father in the Christian church[4] understands him to deny it, but withal observes that he denied God's prescience too (as one might indeed that he doubted it at least) in that discourse. Plato discourses soberly of it, asserting and diminishing it at once,—as we shall afterwards have more occasion to note; the generality were for it, as is evident. And indeed the many monitory dreams related in Cicero's books upon that subject, and by Plutarch in several parts of his works, show that notices of things to come were not uncommon among the pagans, and in a way that seemed more remarkable and of more certain signification than their so much boasted oracles. How they came by them, from whom, or upon what account, we do not now inquire. But since the matter was really so, it seems no incredible thing that some or other in the Christian church, even in these latter ages, should, upon better terms, partake somewhat of some such privilege. Nor is it difficult to produce many instances within the latter centuries,[5] that would incline one to think it hath been so.

But whosoever shall pretend it, I see not what right they can claim to be believed by others, till the event justify the prediction; unless they can otherwise show the signs which are wont to accompany and recommend a supernatural revelation. Where any such is really afforded, it is like it may produce a concomitant confidence that will exclude all present doubt in *their own* minds, without external confirmation. But then, as the apostle speaks in another case, if they have

[1] *De Divinat.* [2] *De Placit. Phil.*

[3] Μαντικὴν δὲ ἁπασαν ἐν ἄλλοις ἀναιρεῖ ὡς καὶ ἐν τῇ μικρᾷ ἐπιτομῇ.—*In Vita Epic.*

[4] August. *De Civit. Dei*, lib. v. c. 9.

[5] Savonarola, G. Wishart of Scotland, and several others.

faith, they must have it to themselves. They can never describe their confidence to another, so as to distinguish it from the impression of a mere groundless and often deluded imagination. Nor are others to grudge at it, if some particular persons be in this or that instance privileged with so peculiar a Divine favour as to have secret monitions of any danger approaching them, that they may avoid it, or direction concerning their own private affairs, which none else are concerned to take cognizance of. But if the matter be of common concernment, the concurrence of things is to be noted; and a greater regard will seem to be challenged if several of these mentioned indications do fall in together:—

As, supposing a gradual foregoing languor and degeneracy of religion in the several parts of the Christian world, and Christianity, with the several professions which it comprehends, looks less like a religion, or a thing that hath any reference to God, but rather that men have thought fit to make use of this or that various mode of it as a mark of civil distinction, under which to form and unite themselves into opposite parties for the serving of secular interests and designs:—it generally makes no better men than paganism:—a spirit of atheism, profaneness, and contempt of the Deity and of all things sacred, more openly shows and avows itself than perhaps heretofore in any pagan nation; and not in a time of gross darkness, such as formerly for several ages had spread itself over the whole face of the Christian church, but in a time of very clear and bright light:—worse and more horrid principles, even in the ancient sense of mankind apparently destructive of common order and of all human society, are inserted into the religion of Christians, and obtain with them that have, in great part, obtained the power in the Christian world, and would wholly engross the Christian name:—better principles in others are inefficacious, and signify nothing too generally to the governing of their lives and practice:—men are let loose to all imaginable wickedness, as much as if they were not Christians, and many (namely, that more vastly numerous and bulky party)

the more for that they are so; yea, and not let loose only, but obliged by their very principles to those peculiar acts and kinds of wickedness and violence which directly tend to turn Christendom into an Aceldama, and involve the Christian world in ruin and confusion :—when multitudes stand as it were prepared, and in a ready posture, to execute such vengeance as is highly deserved by others, and make judgment begin at (that which our profession obliges us rather to account) the house of God, to rebound afterward with greater terror and destructiveness upon themselves who began it :—

If now some eminent servant of God, much noted and of great remark for knowledge, wisdom, and sanctity, remote from all suspicion of levity or sinister design, shall have very expressly foretold such a time and state of things as this, and what will be consequent thereupon, and with great earnestness and vehemency inculcated the premonition; and if, in such a time, God shall set again and again a monitory torch high and flaming in the heavens over our heads; methinks it doth not savour well to make light account of it, or think it signifies nothing. For—to speak indeed as himself doth allow and teach us to conceive—the majesty of God doth in such concurrent appearances seem more august. His hand is lifted up, and he doth as it were 'accingere se,'—'prepare and address himself' to action, raise himself up in his holy habitation,[1] whereupon all flesh is required to be silent before him,—a posture both of reverence in respect of what he hath already done, and of expectation as to what he may further be about to do. And of what import or signification soever such things in their concurrence may be to us, it surely ought to be attended to, and received with great seriousness; yea, and with thankfulness: especially if there be ground to hope well concerning the issue, (as there will always be to them that fear God), and we can see the better what special sort and kind of duty we are more peculiarly to apply ourselves to in the meantime.

And whereas we know a mind and wisdom governs all affairs

[1] Zech. ii. 13.

and events through the whole universe, it is fit we should meet mind with mind, wisdom with wisdom; that, on our part, an obsequious, docile mind should advert to and wait upon that supreme, all-ruling, divine mind, in all the appearances wherein it looks forth upon us; and, with a dutiful veneration, cry 'Hail' to every radiation of that holy light; accounting, whatever it imports, it opportunely visits the darkness wherein we converse, and should be as gratefully received as the sun peeping through a cloud by one travelling on a dusky day. His is the teaching wisdom: it is well for us if we can be wise enough to learn. And unto that there is a wisdom requisite also: "Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord."[1] And again: "I will instruct thee, and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye,"[2] which implies, our eye must diligently mark his; and that, as it follows, we "be not as the horse or mule, that have no understanding,"[3] etc.

And whereas all the works of God, even those that are of every day's observation, do some way or other represent God to us, and should constantly suggest unto us serious thoughts of him; those that are more extraordinary ought the more deeply to impress our minds, and excite in us those higher acts of a religious affection which the circumstances of our present state admit not that they can be constant in the same degree;—as, though subjects ought always to bear a loyal mind towards their prince, upon such greater occasions when he shows himself in solemn state it is becoming there be correspondent acts of more solemn homage. But, upon the whole, since all the certain knowledge we can have of such futurities as naturally and in themselves are not certain, must be by God's own revelation only; and all probable pre-apprehension of them by the use of our own reason and prudence, upon any other apt 'media' that occur to us; while we can confine our desire of seeing into the future within these limits, it will be just and innocent. And therefore we may now go on—

[1] Ps. cvii. 43. [2] Ps. xxxii. 8. [3] Ver. 9.

2. To the positive discovery wherein this appetite is inordinate, and degenerates into a distemper of mind. And it may in general be collected from what hath been now said; namely, that when we remain unsatisfied with what God is pleased to reveal about such things, and with what a well governed prudence can any other way discern; and have an itch and hankering of mind after other prognostics that lie not within this compass, and are no proper objects either for our faith or our reason; this is the distemper we are to get redressed, and are concerned to take heed lest we indulge or cherish.

And that we may yet be somewhat more distinct in making this discovery, these that follow will be plain indications that our inquisitiveness and thirst after the knowledge of future things is a distemper of mind, and ought to be considered and dealt with accordingly. As,—

(1.) If it be accompanied with discontent, and a fastidious loathing of our present lot and portion in the world; which is so much the worse if, when our affectation and desire of change proceeds really and at the bottom from private self-respect, we endeavour to delude others or flatter ourselves into a belief that it is only the public good we are intent upon, and the better state of God's interest in the world; and worst of all, if our desires be turbulent, vindictive, and bloody,—that is, if not only they are so fervent towards our own hoped advantages that we care not through what public confusions and calamities our private ends be promoted and carried on, but should like it the better to see at the same time our heart's desire upon them we have allowed ourselves to hate, yea, though it be never so true that they hate us, and have been injurious to us. Thus with the study and desire of a new state of things, which in itself may be in some cases innocent; and, limited to due methods and degrees of the desired change, not only innocent, but a duty, (for there is no state of things in this world so good, but, being still imperfectly so, we ought to desire it were better,) a twofold vicious appetite may fall in;—that of avarice and revenge;

of good to ourselves beyond what comes to our share, and of hurt to other men: which complicated disease must taint and infect every thought and look that is directed forward towards a better state of things.

If this be the case, it must be great negligence and indulgence to ourselves not to discern it. For the incoherence and ill agreement of what is real and what is pretended, would soon appear to one not willing to be mistaken. Sincere devotedness to God and his interest would be always most conjunct with that complacential faith in his governing wisdom and power, and entire resignment of ourselves and all his and our own concerns to his pleasure and goodness, that we will never think his procedure too slow, or suspect him of neglecting his own interest, or that which he judges, and which therefore *is* most truly, ours. And it is ever accompanied with that placid benignity and universal love to other men,—enemies themselves being by the known rules of the gospel included,—as that we would not wish their least injury for our own greatest advantage; and should most earnestly wish that, if God see good, the advantage of his interest in the world might be so carried on as to comprehend and take in therewith their greatest advantage also. And if we should see cause to apprehend it may fall out to be otherwise, that surely ought to be our temper which the prophet expresses, and appeals to God concerning it, upon a very frightful prospect of things: "I have not desired the woful day, O Lord, thou knowest."[1] So remote it should be from us to press forward with a ravenous, cruel eye towards a tragical bloody scene, or to accuse the Divine patience which we should adore, and, perhaps as much as any others, do also need.

(2.) If there be a greater inclination to look forward into the future things of time than those of eternity; if in the former we find a connaturalness, and they seem most agreeable to us; these other are tasteless, and without sap and savour; if it would be a great and sensible consolation to be assured such a state of things as we would choose shall very

[1] Jer. xvii. 16.

shortly obtain; but to think of a state approaching, wherein all things shall be perfectly and unexceptionably well for ever, is but cold comfort:—blessed God, what a mortal token is this! Do we apprehend nothing of distemper in it? Do we see ourselves the "men of time," (as the Hebrew expresses what we read, "men of the world,"[1]) and do not our hearts misgive at the thought? How little likely is it we are designed for that blessed eternity to which our spirits are so little suitable; whenas it is said of them that are for the state wherein mortality shall be swallowed up of life, that "he that hath wrought them for that selfsame thing is God?"[2] Can the felicity of heaven belong to them that value it not as their best good, but count a terrestrial paradise, of their own devising, better?

(3.) If we be so intent upon this or that future event, as that hereby the due impression is worn off of much greater and more important things that are already past. What so great things have we to expect in our time as we know have come to pass in former time? What so great as that the Son of God came down into our world; did put on man; lived a lifetime among us mortals; breathed everywhere heavenly love, and grace, and sweetness; and with these grateful odours perfumed this noisome, impure, forlorn region of darkness and death; died a sacrifice for sinners, and overcame death; ascended in triumph to the throne of God; sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high? What so great as "the mystery of godliness; that God was manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory?"[3] Are any of those little futurities, whereof we have but an uncertain expectation, fit to be compared with these things which we certainly know to have come to pass? or have we anything so important and great to fix our eye upon, as a Redeemer now in his exaltation, invested with all power in heaven and earth, to whom "every knee must bow, and every tongue confess;" the arbiter of life and death to

[1] Ps. xvii. 14. [2] 2 Cor. v. 4, 5. [3] 1 Tim. iii. 16.

men; who hath established so admirable a frame of religion for the reduction of apostate man; made it triumph over the obstinate infidelity of the Jews and the idolatry of the Gentile world? And what the glorious issue of his administration will be, we already know, and are not left about it to suspenseful, dubious inquiry; nor do need a more certain revelation than we have. Is all this to be waived and overlooked, while we stand at a gaze, expecting what shall be the height of the French monarchy, or the fate of the Dutch republic, or of this or that particular person now upon the stage? It must surely be an ill symptom, and an indication of a sickly mind, when things have all their value and regard with us, not as they are great, but as they are new; and are only considerable to us because they are yet future and unknown.

(4.) If we more earnestly covet to foreknow the approach of an external state of things that would be better in our account, than to feel the good effect upon our spirits of one that we take to be worse and that is externally afflictive to us. This excludes the apprehension of a wise Providence governing the world, that pursues a design in what it doth or permits: as if we thought God did afflict us for affliction's sake, as more intending therein his own pleasure than our profit: or, as if we would impute a levity to Providence, and reckoned it inconstant and desultory, even beneath the ordinary prudence of a man; that it might forget and desist, and would not drive on a design to an issue; or that—contrary to what God tells Eli by Samuel[1]—when he began, he would divert and alter his course before he made an end: or it implies, we place our felicity in somewhat without us, more than in a good habit and temper of spirit within; whereas surely things are much amiss with us, if we do not account that a mortified heart towards whatsoever is temporary and terrene is a thousandfold more desirable than the best external state of things that is ever to be enjoyed under the sun. As calamitous as the condition of Job was, it

[1] 1 Sam. iii. 12.

had been a worse evil than any he suffered, if that censure of him were true, that he chose iniquity rather than affliction;[1] or if that were not true, which he seems to intimate concerning himself, that he was less intent upon a present release from the furnace than at length to come out like gold.[2]

(5.) If the other parts of Scripture be less savoury to us than the prophetical; and especially when these are of more grateful savour than the preceptive part. This is of great affinity with the foregoing character. For the precepts in God's word describe to us that excellent frame of spirit which afflictions are designed, as one sort of means, more deeply to impress. And what there is of ill character here lies in this,—when anything is of greater value than that comely, amiable, well-complexioned temper of spirit. And surely it less concerns us, what God will do without us, than what he will have us do and be ourselves. It is an ill circumstance with a diseased person, when he hath less inclination to such things as tend to bring him to a confirmed habit of health, than such as more serve to nourish his disease. And whereas 'quicquid recipitur—ad modum recipientis,' there is little doubt, but where this distemper we are speaking of prevails, men may be much inclined to make that use even of Scripture prophecies as to feed their distemper. When they can relish and allow themselves to mind no other parts of the Bible: when they take more pleasure to be conversant in these obscurer things than those that are plain, and concern us more,—as God hath mercifully provided that such things in his word should be plainest that are of greatest concernment to us; and they perhaps neither have the requisite helps nor the ability with them to master the obscurity: when our prepossessed fancy must be the interpreter, and we will make the prophecy speak what it never meant; draw it down to the little particularities of the time and place wherein we live; and are peremptory in our applications, and so confident till we find ourselves mistaken, that, when we do, we begin to

[1] Job xxxvi. 21. [2] Job xxiii. 10.

suspect the Bible,—as if divine truths, and our attachments to them, must stand and fall together.

(6.) And lastly, when we have an undue regard to unscriptural prophecies; which we may be supposed to have, if we either much search after them, or give hasty credit to them without search.

i. If we much search after them, as weak and sickly appetites are wont to do for rarities and novelties; we are not content with what occurs, nor with our own allotment, and God's ordinary dispensation, if things of that kind occur not, but purvey and listen out after them; as if we had not considerable things enough, both for our employment, and our entertainment and gratification besides.

ii. If we believe them without search, only because they seem to speak according to our mind; imbibe all things of that import promiscuously and on the sudden, without examining the matter. "The simple believeth every word."[1] It is the business of judgment to distinguish and discern. We therefore call it 'discretion.' It totally fails, when we can find no medium between believing everything and nothing. Some things, indeed, of this pretence are so apparently idle and ridiculous, that it will become a prudent man to reject them at the first sight. Some may perhaps, partly from the matter or partly from the person and other concurring circumstances, have such an appearance as ought to stay our minds upon them, detain us a while, and hold us in some suspense, while we consider and examine whether any further regard is to be given them or no. It is a very distempered, ravenous appetite, that swallows all it can catch without choice; that allows no leisure to distinguish between what is suitable or fit for nourishment, and what is either noxious or vain.

II. And now for the cure of this distemper. We are to consider the nature of the things the foreknowledge whereof we so earnestly affect. And we find they are not such futurities as have their certain causes in nature; as when the

[1] Prov. xiv. 15.

sun will rise and set, or be nearer us or remoter; when there will be an eclipse, etc.; these are not the things which will satisfy this appetite; but mere contingencies that depend upon free and arbitrary causes,—that is, especially upon the mind and will of man, as it is under the direction of the supreme and all-governing mind. And again, we are to consider the nature of the knowledge we covet of these things; namely, that it is not *conjectural*, (which indeed were not knowledge), but we would be at a certainty about them. Now, hereupon we are further to consider that there is no reasonable appetite which we may not seek to have gratified in some apt and proper way; that is, by means that are both lawful and likely to attain our end.

In the present case, we can think of no course to be taken for the obtaining of this knowledge, even giving the greatest scope and latitude to our thoughts, but it must suppose one of these two things: either that we look upon it as an ordinary gift, to be acquired by our own endeavours,—that is, by art and industry, and the use of natural means and helps, whereby we imagine our natures may be heightened and improved to this pitch; or else that we reckon it an extraordinary, immediate gift of God,—so that if we affect it we have no course to take but to seek it at his hands by prayer; either that God would confer it upon ourselves, or upon some others, by whom we may be informed.

And we are now to bethink ourselves, what encouragement or allowance we can suppose is given us to seek it either of these ways. For, if we can seek it in neither of these, we must be obliged either to assign a third, (as we never can), or abandon it as an unreasonable and vicious appetite, the satisfaction whereof is no way to be so much as attempted or sought after. And now,—

First, As to the former of these ways. There is nothing more to be despaired of, the very attempt being both foolish and impious; both most impossible and unlawful:—

1. It is plainly an *impossible* attempt; for what natural means, what rules of art, can give us the knowledge of such

futurities as we are speaking of, or improve our natural faculties to it? It is a knowledge quite of another kind, and alien to our natures; for besides the notices we have of things by sense,—which is limited wholly to things present as its object,—and our knowledge of first and self-evident principles,—from which how remote are the future contingencies we now speak of!—we have no imaginable way of coming by the knowledge of anything, otherwise than by reasoning and discourse, which supposes a natural connexion of things. Whereupon, when we have sure hold of one end of the thread, we can proceed by it and lead ourselves on, by such things as we know, to other things we know not. But what such natural connexion is there between any present thing known to us, and this sort of future things; which, for the most part, are such as must be brought about by the concurrence of great multitudes of free agents who may be opposed by as great, and prevented of accomplishing what they designed, though their minds were never so constantly intent upon the design? But we have no way to know with certainty the present minds of so many men, nor of any man at all, by immediate inspection, or otherwise than as we may collect by the former series of his actions or professions; wherein men may deceive the most quick-sighted, and really intend otherwise than they seem. Much less do we know that so mutable a thing as the mind of man is, will not alter, and especially of so many men. And their condition and outward circumstances may alter, if not their minds. What can be certain in such a region of changes, where the effecting of purposes depends upon the body as well as the mind, and many external aids and helps besides; and where all are subject to so many accidents,—to maims, sicknesses, and deaths? Nay, who can tell what his own mind shall be hereafter, supposing any such futurity to be within his own power; or that his power shall be the same, if his mind should not change? And add, what is more than all the rest,[1] "Who knoweth the mind of God, or being his counsellor

[1] Isa. xl. 13; Rom. xi. 34.

hath taught him?" Who can tell what he will do, or enable or permit men to do? What event could ever have been thought more certain, beforehand, than the destruction of the Jews by Haman's means? And who could ever have foreseen, a few days or hours before, that he should be hanged on the gallows he prepared for Mordecai? Who can ever think or hope to measure that boundless range and latitude wherein infinite wisdom and power may work this way or that? or, within that vast and immense scope, who can be able to predict what way God will take, or what he will do or not do? When all human contrivance and forecast is at an end, still more ways lie open to him; or his power can make more, and break its way through whatsoever obstructions. "We know not what to do," says Jehoshaphat in his distress; "but our eyes are upon thee,"[1]—a dutiful confession of the limitedness of human wit and power and of the unlimitedness of the Divine, both at once! To offer at comprehending his profound designs and abstruse methods, only shows how little we understand ourselves or him—our own scant measure, or his immensity. We might better attempt to sound the ocean with our finger, or gather it into the hollow of our hand. It were happy for us if our confessed ignorance might end in adoration, and that the sense of our hearts were such as the apostle's words would aptly express: "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"[2] Such as affect to be wiser, but not so pious, and go about to form models and ideas for the future apart from Him, how often doth their great wit only serve to expose their folly, and make them the sport of Fortune,—as some would call it; we may say rather, of that wise and righteous Providence that delights to triumph over baffled insolence, (for 'ludit in humanis,' etc.,) and deride a confidence that is founded only in proud impotency! "He that sits in the heavens laughs; the Most High hath them in derision." How often are the wisest politicians dis-

[1] 2 Chron. xx. 12. [2] Rom. xi. 33.

appointed and despised; all their measures broken, their models shattered and discomposed, and all their fabrics overturned in a moment! So remote is human wit, at the utmost stretch, from any certainty about the futurities we speak of.

And if any imagine it may be helped to foresee, by some art or other, or by rules framed and collected upon former experience,—according whereto judgments are said heretofore to have been happily made of what would come to pass,—it is not here intended to examine the several ways that have been taken and trusted in for this purpose. That they are all such as have been and are much disputed, if they were not with manifest evidence disproved, would argue the foreknowledge of things not likely to be very certain that must be had by arts and rules that are themselves uncertain.

How much hath been said, anciently and of late, to discover the vanity of that sort of astrology that relates to the futurities we have under consideration! Such as have a mind may view what is written to that purpose, and may save themselves much vain labour, by perusing the learned Dr. More's late 'Tetractys,' and what it refers to in his 'Mystery of Godliness.' Have we heard of none of our later pretenders this way that have incurred the like fate with that wise man of Greece that was laughed at by a silly girl, as Laërtius tells us, for so long gazing upon the stars, (though perhaps upon a better account,) till at length in his walk he fell into a ditch? that he minded so much what was over his head, that he took no notice what was at his feet? And for the ancient augury of the pagans, in the several sorts of it, how much was it had in contempt by the wiser among themselves, insomuch that one of them says he wondered how they could look upon one another and not laugh; as who would not, that such strange things should be foreshown by the flying, or the singing, or the feeding of birds? Their usual haruspicy was as wise and as much regarded by some greater minds among them; as Alexander, that reproved and jeered the impertinency of his soothsayer, that would have withheld

him from action upon the pretence of some ill omen he had observed in the entrails; telling him that he would surely think he were impertinent and troublesome, if he should go about to interrupt *him* in *his* employment, when he was busy viewing his sacrifice; and asked him, when he pressed further, what greater impediment a man could have, that had great things before his eyes, than a doting, superstitious fortune-teller?[1] And where there was not so much wisdom and fortitude as to despise such fooleries, how ludicrous was it that great and momentous affairs were to be governed by them! that a general was not to march an army or fight a battle, but first such observation must be had of the flight of birds and the entrails of beasts, or other things as idle as they,—as the whirlings, rollings, and noise of rivers, the change of the moon, etc.: upon which in Germany, (as is observed,) when Cæsar had invaded it, their presaging women were to be consulted before it was thought fit to give him battle;[2] besides what was not less vain but more horrid, presaging upon the convulsed members and the flowing blood of a man slain for the purpose.[3] Nay, and the excess of this desire hath tempted some to try the blacker practices of necromancy, or what might be gained to satisfy and please it by converse with departed souls; or what if it be other familiar spirits? We here consider the folly of such courses apart from the impiety; as what reason have we upon which to apprehend that they can ascertain us, or be ordinarily certain themselves, of such futurities as we speak of? But also the thought of any such course, we are to presume, is horrid to the minds of serious Christians; unto whom what we find in the Holy Scriptures concerning any such ways of presaging as have been mentioned should methinks, be enough to form their spirits both to the hatred and the contempt of them, and by consequence, of the principle itself—this vain appetite—that leads unto them, and hath captivated whole nations into so miserable delusion by them.

[1] Quint. Curt. [2] Clem. Alexand. *Strom.* lib. i.
[3] Diod. Sic. *Bibl. Hist.*, lib. v.

"Thus saith the Lord, thy Redeemer, . . . that frustrateth the tokens of the liars, and maketh diviners mad; that turneth wise men backward, and maketh their knowledge foolish:" "Thou art wearied in the multitude of thy counsels. Let now the astrologers, the star-gazers, the monthly prognosticators, stand up and save thee from these things that shall come upon thee. Behold, they shall be as stubble; the fire shall burn them; they shall not deliver themselves from the flames," [1] etc.

And though it be true that God hath often given premonitions of future things by dreams,—which is a matter that belongs not to this head,—yet the rules that are given by some learned men for the interpreting of such dreams as contain not the things expressly pretended to be signified, are generally so very ridiculous, that it is hard to say whether they were learnedly busy or idle, that thought fit to trouble themselves or the world with them.[2] And surely, though some dreams have been divine, such rules of interpreting any are so meanly human as to be fit enough to be thrown in hither, and thrown away with the rest of the trash noted before; and may help to let us see that the foreknowledge of the future things we are considering is so impossible to human nature, improved by whatsoever rules and precepts of our devising, that while men seek to become wise in this kind by such means, they do but befool themselves, and are not a whit the more knowing, but show themselves the less prudent and sober. And if such knowledge be a thing whereof human nature by itself is not capable, to be impatient of ignorance in these things is to be offended that God hath made us such creatures as we find we are: that is, if this had been the natural endowment of some other order of creatures, how unreasonable were it that a man should quarrel with his own nature, and with the inseparable circumstances of his own state! All creatures are of limited natures to one or other

[1] Isa. xliv. 24, 25; xlvii. 13, 14. See also Isa. viii. 19, 20; Dan. ii. 27, 28.

[2] Oneirocrit., Artem., Achm., etc.

particular kind. This or that creature admits of all the perfections of its own kind. It admits not those of another kind. How foolish were it if a man should vex himself that he cannot fly like a bird, or run like a stag, or smell like a hound; or cannot as an angel fly at pleasure between heaven and earth, or visit the several orbs, and exactly measure their magnitudes and distances from one another!

2. We are therefore to consider that the affectation of such foreknowledge,—that is, to have it in and of ourselves, or by any means of our devising,—is *unlawful*, as well as impossible. Indeed this might be collected from the former; for the capacity of our natures ought to limit our desires. And it hence also further appears unlawful upon the highest account, in that it were to aspire to what is most peculiar and appropriate to the Deity. For hereby the great God demonstrates his Godhead, and, expostulating with idolaters, insults over the inactive ignorance of their impotent, inanimate deities upon this account. "Produce your cause," saith he, "bring forth your strong reasons. Let them bring them forth, and show us what shall happen. . . . Show the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods,"[1] as much as to say, 'If they be gods, why do they not, as gods, predict things to come, that if they be gods we may know it?' So in the 42nd chapter of the same prophecy, verses 8, 9: "I am the Lord; that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images. Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare; before they spring forth I tell you of them." "This is a thing," saith he, "that doth peculiarly belong to me; it is a glory of mine that shall never be imparted." And to the same sense is that in the 46th chapter of that prophecy, verses 9, 10: "Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all

[1] Isa. xli. 21—23.

my pleasure." So also did our blessed Saviour, when he had a mind to convince that he was, as he gave out, the Son of God, design the same medium for that purpose: "Now I tell you before it come, that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am he;" and again: "I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe."[1]

It was indeed, the great temptation used to our first parents: "Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." Undoubtedly that knowledge wherewith they were tempted must include at least foreknowledge in it: "Ye shall be as gods, knowing," etc. They were tempted by an expectation of being in this respect made like God; and we are become by it in this respect like beasts that perish; and in other respects like the devils themselves, who joy in our deception and perdition: too like beasts in ignorance, and devils in malignity!

What can be a more presumptuous arrogance than to aim at the royalties of the Godhead? If to affect what belongs to the nature and capacity of another creature were foolish,—to aspire to any prerogative and peculiarity of God himself cannot but be extremely impious and wicked! Are we to be offended that we are creatures? that our natures and the capacity of our understandings are not unlimited and all comprehending, when we owe it to the mere benignity and good pleasure of our Maker that we are anything, and much more that we have any such thing as an understanding at all? Yea, and if this knowledge were not peculiar to God, yet inasmuch as he hath not given it us, nor appointed us any means of attaining it, it is an uncreaturely disposition not to be satisfied without it. The rebuke our Saviour gave his disciples, in one particular case of this nature, ought also to be monitory to us in all such cases; that is, when they inquire, "Wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" his answer is reprehensive: "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power."[2] The expression is remarkable, "*Which the*

[1] John xiii. 19; xiv. 29. [2] Acts i. 6, 7.

Father hath (ἔθετο) *put in his own power.*" It implies as if by a positive act God had reserved and locked up from us the things which he hath not vouchsafed to reveal. And we may see how he hath, as it were industriously, drawn a curtain between the present and the future time, that we cannot see so far as one moment before us. Shall we with rude and irreverent hands, as it were, attempt to rend or draw aside the curtain?

Secondly. And from hence we may also see, in the next place, how little encouragement we have in the other way to expect this knowledge,—namely, by supplicating God for it as an extraordinary gift to be obtained immediately from him. If we have not wisdom enough to present unto him reasonable desires, we may expect his wisdom will deny us such as are unreasonable. He is never so apt to dislike our requests for their being too great as too little; or for their having nothing valuable or important in them—nothing suitable to him or to us; fit for him to give or for us to seek or receive. In the present case, it is true, he hath sometimes favoured men with this kind of knowledge,—ordained and inspired prophets, who were to signify his purposes and pleasure to others; but it was rather modestly declined than sought, and was mostly upon great and important occasions, for high and very considerable ends, and to be effected at seasons and by persons of his own choosing. Nor doth it seem a thing fit for men to make the matter of petition. For if they should, either it must be for some reason peculiar to themselves and which others cannot generally allege as well as they,—which it is not supposable any can be able to assign; or for some common reason that concerns the generality of men as much, and then we are sure it can be of no weight,—for, upon the same reason, all should as much be prophets:—which it is plain he doth not judge fit, who can best judge, in that he hath not made them so; which is concluding as to things he hath not made it our duty to seek. And that this is a communication not fit to be constant and general at all times and to all persons, is evident in itself, and may appear by divers

considerations, that partly respect God and his government, partly ourselves and our own interest and concernment.

1. On *God's part.* It would greatly detract from the majesty of his government, that it should have no *arcana,* and that all things should lie open to every eye. We may easily apprehend that the dignity of the Divine government was in this respect designed to be kept up to an awful height, when we find there is somewhat mentioned to us, (and how many things more may there be that are not mentioned!) which the angels in heaven know not, nor the human soul of our Lord himself, but the Father only. Nor, again, was it suitable particularly to the government of God over man in this present state: which we find designed for a state of probation, to be concluded and shut up at last by a solemn judgment. For unto this state the final judgment hath its peculiar, only reference. Therein we are to "receive the things done in the body;" that is, as it is explained, "according to what we have done, whether good or evil."[1] How unfit were it that probationers for eternity should generally foreknow events that shall fall out in the state of their trial, wherein they are to be strictly tied up to rules without regard to events; and are to approve themselves in that sincerity, constancy, fortitude, dependence upon God, resignation of themselves and their concerns to him, that could have little place or opportunity to show themselves, in a state wherein all things were at a certainty to them!

2. On *our own part.* It is to be considered that the foreknowledge of temporary events is not a thing of that value to us which we may perhaps imagine it is. It would serve us more for curiosity than use: an unfit thing for us to petition in, or expect to be gratified. The wiser heathens have thought meanly of it. They have believed indeed, that *God did sometimes enable men to prophesy;* but have reckoned it, as one of them speaks, *a gift indulged unto human imprudence.*[2] That author accounts weaker minds[3]

[1] 2 Cor. v. 10. [2] Ὡς μαντικὴν ἀφροσύνῃ Θεὸς ἀνθρωπίνῃ δέδωκεν. —Plat. in Tim.
[3] Οὐδεὶς ἔννους.—*Ib.*

the usual subjects of it; that *no man in his right mind* attained it, but either being alienated from himself by sleep or a disease; and that they were not wont to understand themselves the meaning of their own visions, but must have them interpreted by others. The result of a larger discourse he hath about it than is fit here to be inserted, comes to this, that fools *divine*, and wise men *judge*. Whereupon another[1] thinks such prophecies little to be regarded; counting it strange, that what a wise man could not see, a madman should; and that when one hath lost human sense he should obtain divine!

They were not acquainted, indeed, with those ways wherein God revealed his mind to holy men, whom he used as his own amanuenses or penmen, or who were otherwise to serve him for sacred purposes. But when we consider Balaam's being a prophet, methinks we should not be over fond of the thing itself, abstractly considered. How unspeakably is the Spirit of holiness, as such, to be preferred! To have a heart subject to God, willing to be governed by him, to commit to him, even in the dark, our less considerable temporal concernments; and confidently to rely, for our eternal concernments, upon his plain word in the gospel, wherein life and immortality are brought to light, would make us little feel the need of prophecy. The radical principle of holiness is love, for it is "the fulfilling of the law;" in the absence whereof the apostle esteems the "gift of prophecy," with the addition of understanding all mysteries and all knowledge, to go for nothing.[2] And if we strictly consider, wherein can we pretend it needful to us to foreknow the events that are before us? They are either bad and ungrateful, or good and grateful. For the former sort, what would it avail us to foreknow them? That we may avoid them? That is a contradiction. How are they avoidable when we know they will befall us? Is it that we be not surprised by them? We have other means to prevent it: to bear an equal temper of mind towards all conditions; to live always, in this region of

[1] Cicero. [2] 1 Cor. xiii. 2.

changes, expecting the worst,—at least not to expect rest on earth; to familiarize to ourselves the thoughts of troubles, apprehending, as to those that are private, we are always liable.

And for any greater, common calamities, that we may share in with the generality, usually they come on more slowly. There often are premonitory tokens, such as were before mentioned in this discourse, sufficient to keep us from being surprised. And with the rest this may concur, as was said, that perhaps some or other of that value and consideration as to deserve our regard may, in such a case, have great pre-apprehensions of approaching trouble; which, whether they proceed from their greater prudence and sagacity or from any more divine impression upon their minds, we need not determine. If it should be the latter, the design may yet be, not to ascertain, but to awaken us. Upon which supposition, a serious consideration of the thing may well consist with suspending our belief of it. And whether it prove true or false, if we are put thereby upon the doing of nothing but what a prudent man and a good Christian should do however, and unto which we only needed excitation, a very valuable end is gained. Affairs are generally managed in human, yea, and in the Christian life, upon no certainty of this or that particular event; it is enough that we are put upon seasonable consideration of what concerns us, in the one kind or the other, and do accordingly steer our course. When Jonah was sent to Nineveh upon that ungrateful errand, and came a stranger into that luxurious paganish city, though he brought them no credentials from heaven, nor, that we find, wrought any miracle to confirm his mission, yet the matter he published in their streets being in itself most considerable, and they having, no doubt, sufficient light to know their practices were such as deserved the doom they were threatened with, and needed redress, they hereupon consider what he said, reform, and are spared. And what harm was now done in all this? except that Jonah had too tender a concern for his own reputation, and lest he should be thought a false prophet.

Whereas the event that happened did better prove the impression upon his mind divine, than the destruction of the city after their repentance had done; it being a thing more agreeable to the Divine nature, and more worthy of God, to save than destroy a penitent people. If we see no such disposition to repentance, we have the more reason to expect the overflowing calamity; and have enough to prevent our being surprised, without foreknowing the event. But for events that are pleasing and grateful, no matter how surprising they be; the more,—the better, the sweeter, and the pleasanter. "When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream. Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing."[1] It enhanceth mercy, when it is preventing and unexpected.

And we may add, concerning ill events, it is not only needless to foreknow them, but better to be ignorant. Think what a case we were in, had we the prospect lying distinctly before us of all the evils that shall befall us through our whole life. 'Such a day I shall have a terrible fit of the cholic, or the stone: such a day my house will be burnt, or I shall be undone, and reduced to beggary: such a day my husband, wife, or this or that pleasant child, will die: at such a time I shall break a bone, or be in prison,' etc. Were this knowledge a felicity? 'Some may think,' says Cicero,[2] 'it were of great concernment to us to know what shall happen. But,' he adds, 'Dicæarchus wrote a great book to show it is better to be ignorant.' He had indeed a copious argument; and the book, it is like, were a jewel. But enough is obvious to any man's reason that will soberly consider. Infinite knowledge is only agreeable to infinite wisdom and power. How unsuitable were the knowledge we are apt to covet, to our impotency and imprudence!—as monstrous as the head of a giant joined to the body of a child! The increase of such knowledge would certainly but increase our sorrow, and be to us but an engine of torture, a Medusa's head,—always affrighting us with its own ideas, that would be worse to us, and more tor-

[1] Ps. cxxvi. 1, 2. [2] *De Divin.*

menting, than snakes and serpents. Divine mercy, in these respects, keeps us ignorant. Thereto it is fit we should attribute it; not to ill-will, as the devil at first suggested, and as they seemed to apprehend against whom Plutarch[1] sagely reasons: 'That it was very improbable that God, who hath given us birth, nourishment, being, and understanding, should intend only to signify his displeasure towards us by withholding from us the knowledge of things to come.'

Would we know what concerns our duty? We have plain rules to direct us; it would but tempt, disturb, or divert us, many times, to know the event. 'You need not consult a diviner,' saith a heathen,[2] 'whether you are with hazard to help your friend or defend your country; nor anything, by like reason, which we already know we ought to do.' 'No more,' saith one commenting upon him,[3] 'than whether a man should eat or sleep, or whether a husbandman should plant or sow?' Or would we fill our minds with great thoughts, and employ them about matters more important than the affairs of the present time? Besides all the great things that we know to be past, let us look forward to certain futurities. We may look even with a certain expectation for the day when the heavens shall be rolled up as a scroll, and pass away with great noise, and the elements melt with fervent heat, and the earth, and all things therein, be consumed and burnt up. We have a certain foreknowledge of the final glorious appearing and coming of our Lord. We know he will come, and it will be gloriously: "Behold the Son of man, coming in the heavens, with power and great glory!" Such things as these we look for, according to his promise. He will come, and his reward with him. The trumpet will sound, and the dead arise. How great a thing is it to have graves opening all the world over, and men and women springing up afresh out of the dust, and all the chosen ones of our Lord caught up into the clouds to meet their Redeemer in the air, and so to be for ever with the Lord!

Let our thoughts fly over earth and time; they will be

[1] *De Defect. Orac.* [2] Epict. [3] Simpl.

purer and less tainted. Let them centre in God; they will be more steady, composed, and calm. Fixedly apprehend him to be most wise, holy, good, powerful, and *ours*. Let our hearts quietly trust in him as such, and be subject to him, contented to follow. "He will lead the blind in a way that they know not,"[1] and, if we betake ourselves wholly to him, will be "our God for ever and ever,—our God and our guide even unto death."

[1] Isa. xlii. 16.

OF CHARITY

IN REFERENCE TO OTHER MEN'S SINS.

THE PREFACE.

A PROPOSAL was made to me by some friends, for publishing of these papers; which I cannot doubt proceeded from 'charity,' both to the reader, whose good they intended in it; and to the author, that they could think so slender a performance was capable of serving it.

I cannot indeed, think it unseasonable to take any occasion of recommending Charity, though this subject led me only to consider one single instance of it. But if the practice of it in this one would redress so great an evil, what might we not expect from its universal exercise in all cases upon which it might have influence? Even the tongues of men and angels,—as with our apostle, they are insufficient to supply its absence, so nor are they more than sufficient fully to represent its worth. We vainly expect from either eloquence or disputation the good effects which charity alone, could it take place, would easily bring about without them. How laboriously do we beat our way in the dark! "We grope for the wall, like the blind, and we grope as if we had no eyes: we stumble at noonday, as in the night; but the way of peace we have not known." Human wit is stretched to the uttermost; wherein that comes short, the rest is endeavoured to be supplied by anger: and all to bring us under one form, which either will not be, or if it were, could be to little purpose; while in the meantime this more excellent way is "forgotten of our foot," and we are far from it:—which shows it is God that must cure us, the God of love and peace, and not man.

How soon and easily would a mutual, *universal* charity redress all! For being on one side only, it could never cement both; and limited only to a party, it is not itself, and acts against itself,—divides what it should unite. But a genuine, equally

diffused charity,—how would it melt down men's minds, mollify their rigours, make high things low, crooked straight, and rough places plain! It would certainly, either dispose men to agree upon one way of common order or make them feel very little inconvenience or cause of offence in some variety. But without it, how little would the most exquisite, unexceptionable form, universally complied with in every punctilio, contribute to the church's welfare! No more to its quiet and repose, than an elegant, well-shaped garment to the ease and rest of a disjointed, ulcerous body: nor longer preserve it, than the fair skin of a dead man's body would do *that* from putrefaction and dissolution.

What piety is to our union with God, that is charity to our union with one another. But we are too apt as to both, to expect from the outward form what only the internal, living principle can give,—to covet the one with a sort of fondness, and deny the other.

One common external form in the church of God, wherein all good men could agree, were a most amiable thing, very useful to its comely, better being; and the want of it hath inferred and doth threaten, evils much to be deplored and deprecated. But this divine principle is most simply necessary to its very *being*. Whatsoever violates it, is the most destructive, mortal schism; as much worse than an unwilling breach of outward order, as the malicious tearing in pieces a man's living body is worse than accidental rending his clothes.

And indeed were our ecclesiastical contests about matters that I could think indifferent, as long as there is such a thing as distinction of parties, I should readily choose that where were most of sincere charity,—if I knew where that were. For since our Saviour himself gives it us as the cognizance of Christians,—"By this shall all men know ye are my disciples, if ye love one another,"—I know not how better to judge of Christianity, than by charity. Nor know I where, among them that profess, there is less of either, than with them that would confine and engross both to their own several parties; that say, 'Here is Christ,' and 'There he is;' and will have the notions of Christian, of saint, of church, to extend no farther than their own arbitrarily assigned limits, or than, as they are pleased to describe, their circle. We know to whom the doing so hath been long imputed; and it were well if they had

fewer sorts of imitators. Nor doth it savour more of uncharitableness in any, to think of enclosing the truth and purity of religion only within their own precincts, than it doth of pride and vanity, to fancy they can exclude thence everything of offensive impurity. We are never like to want occasions, *even in this respect*, of exercising charity;—not to palliate the sins of any, but recover sinners. God grant we may *use it more* to this purpose, when the case so requires, and *need it less*.

JOHN HOWE.

ON CHARITY IN RESPECT OF OTHER MEN'S SINS.

1 COR. xiii. 6.

"REJOICETH NOT IN INIQUITY."

THE subject spoken of must be supplied from the foregoing verses, where we find the matter all along in discourse is *Charity;* which it is the principal business of the whole chapter to describe and praise. And this is one of the characters that serve, as they all do, to do both these at once: for being in itself a thing of so great excellency, to show its true nature is to praise it. Whatsoever is its real property, is also its commendation.

Our business here must be,—briefly to explain and give some general account of both these, namely, charity, and this its negative character, that it "rejoiceth not in iniquity;" and to demonstrate the one of the other,—or, which is all one, to show the inconsistency between that divine principle and this horrid practice: upon which the use of this piece of Christian doctrine will ensue.

First. We are to give some account both of this *principle,* the charity which the apostle here treats of; and of the *practice* which the text denies of it, *rejoicing in iniquity.*

I. For the *former:* The charity, or love, here spoken of, is the root of all that duty which belongs to the second table. The whole of the duty contained in both is summed up by our Saviour in "love;"—that of the former in that first and great commandment, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart," etc.; that of the latter in this other,

which is like unto it, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself:" upon which two, we are told, "hang all the law and the prophets."[1] The instances which are given in this chapter refer to *man* as the object, and show that it is the love of our *neighbour* which is meant.

But though it be so far human, it is however upon other accounts a real part of Divine love; which we see in 1 John iii. 17. That apostle, speaking even of love to our brother,— "Whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him,"— demands "How dwelleth the love of God in that man?" And David called the kindness he intended the relics of Saul's family, "The kindness of God."[2] This part of love is Divine both in respect of its original, and of somewhat considerable in its object.

1. In respect of its *original.* It is a part of the communicated "Divine nature;" from whence they that partake of it are said to be born of God. It is most conjunct with faith in the Messiah and love to God himself, which are both comprehended in that birth. For, as it is said in the Gospel of John,[3] that "as many as received him," namely Christ, "to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name; which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God;"— and in his First Epistle,[4] "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God:" so it is in this latter place immediately added, as the double property of this Divine production, not more separable from one another than from it, "And every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him." And hereupon also, from the inbeing and exercise of this love, though towards an object that seems very heterogeneous, and of much another kind, we come to bear the name of God's children: "Love your enemies,.....that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven."[5] The law indeed

[1] Matt. xxii. 37—40; see also Rom. xiii. 10.
[2] 2 Sam. ix. 3.
[3] Chap. i. 12, 13.
[4] 1 John v. 1.
[5] Matt. v. 44, 45.

of love to other men, though it oblige to love some above others upon a special reason, yet in its utmost latitude comprehends all mankind under the name of neighbour or brother, as the particular precepts contained in it do sufficiently show; which surely leave us not at liberty to kill, defile, rob, slander, or covet from others than the regenerate —as we count,—or our own friends and relatives.

Now that principle from which we are called God's children must be of *Divine original*, for it is not spoken of them casually, but as their distinguishing character; so that in this respect, they are said to be of God. It is their very difference from the children of another and the worst of fathers:[1] "In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother:" which also shows it is not universally *all love*, unto which this dignity belongs. Some more noble-minded pagans, that were wont to ascribe divinity unto love, have also carefully distinguished, and told us of a love that was genuine, and another that was spurious; the one akin to virtue, the other to vice; and have noted it as an abusive error of the vulgar, to give the same name to God and a disease.[2] The corruption and degeneracy of love is indeed less than human; but the first being and restored rectitude of it, is of an original no less than Divine.

2. And even this love, though placed upon man, is Divine too in respect of its *object;* that is, of somewhat we have to consider in it which is most properly and strictly the object, or the inducement and formal reason why we love. God is the 'primum amabile,' the *first goodness*, as well as the first being. As therefore there is no being, so nor is there any goodness, amiability, or loveliness, which is not derived from him. We love anything more truly and purely, the more explicitly we acknowledge and love God in it. Upon the view of those strokes and lineaments of the Divine pulchritude, and the characters of his glory which are

[1] 1 John iii. 10. [2] Max. Tyr. *Dissert.*

discernible in all his creatures, our love should be some way commensurate with the creation, and comprehend the universe in its large and complacential embraces: though, as anything is of higher excellency and hath more lively touches and resemblances of God upon it, or by the disposition of his providence and law more nearly approaches us, and is more immediately presented to our notice, converse, use, or enjoyment; so our love is to be exercised towards it more explicitly, in a higher degree or with more frequency. As man therefore hath more in him of Divine resemblance, of God's natural likeness and image,—good men, of his moral, holy image,—we ought to love men more than the inferior creatures; and those that are good and holy more than other men; and those with whom we are more concerned, with a more definite love, and which is required to be more frequent in its exercise: but all from the attractive * power * of somewhat Divine appearing in the object. So that all rational love, or that is capable of being regulated and measured by a law, is only so far right in its own kind as we love God in everything, and everything upon his account and for his sake.

The nature and spirit of man is by the apostasy become disaffected and strange to God, alienated from the divine life, addicted to a particular, limited good,—to the creature for itself, apart from God; whereupon the things men love are their idols, and their love idolatry. But where by regeneration a due propension towards God is restored, the universal Good draws their minds, they become inclined and enlarged towards it; and as that is diffused, their love follows it and flows towards it everywhere. They love all things principally in and for God, and therefore such men most as excel in goodness, and in whom the Divine image more brightly shines. Therefore it is most especially *Christian charity* that is here meant; that is, which works towards Christians as such. For compare this with the foregoing chapter, and it will appear *that* charity is treated of in this, which is the vital bond of holy, living union in the Christian church, sup-

posed in the other: whereby, "as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ."[1] This principle, refined, rectified, recovered out of its state of degeneracy, and now obtaining in the soul as a part of the new creature, or the new man which is after God,—as it hath man for its object more especially, and more or less according to what there appears of divine in him,—is the charity here spoken of. Now of this divine charity it is said,—which we are to consider,

II. *It rejoices not in iniquity.* Hereof it cannot be needful to say much by way of explication. The thing carries a prodigious appearance with it, and it might even amaze one to think that on this side hell or short of that state wherein the malignity of wickedness attains its highest pitch, any appearance should be found of it. Yet we cannot think but these eulogies of charity do imply reprehensions, and tacitly insinuate too great a proneness to this worst sort of ἐπιχαιρεκακία, or rejoicing in evil. The Gnostics, or the sect afterwards known by that name, gave already too great occasion for many more express and sharp reproofs of this temper, which were not thrown into the air or meant to nobody. The Scripture saith not in vain, "The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy:" with which, what affinity this disposition hath, we shall have occasion to note anon.

"Rejoicing in iniquity" may be taken, if we abstract from limiting circumstances, two ways:—either in reference to our own sins, or to other men's. *Our own;* when we take pleasure in the design, or in the commission, or in the review and after-contemplation of them; converse in that impure region as in our native element, drink it in like water, find it sweet in the mouth, and hide it under the tongue, etc. *Other men's;* when it is counted a grateful sight, becomes matter of mirth and sport, to see another stab at once the Christian name and his own soul. The scope and series of the apostle's discourse doth here plainly determine it this latter way; for as charity, the subject of his whole discourse,

[1] 1 Cor. xii. 12.

respects other men, so must this contrary disposition also. 'De iniquitate procul dubio aliena,' etc., saith Cajetan upon this place;—'It is, without doubt, unapt to rejoice in the sins of other men, for neither can it endure one's own.' And this aptness to rejoice in the iniquity of others may be upon several accounts. It may either proceed from an affection to their sins, from an undue self-love, or from an excessive disaffection to the persons offending.

1. From a great affection and inclination unto the same kind of sins which they observe in others;—whereupon they are glad of their patronage, and do therefore "not only do such things, but have pleasure in them that do them."[1] Men are too prone to justify themselves by the example of others against their common rule. 'Others take their liberty, and why may not I?' And so they go, as Seneca says sheep do, 'non quâ eundum est, sed quâ itur,'—'the way which is trodden, not which ought to be.'

2. From an undue and over-indulgent love of themselves. Whence it is that, as the case may be, they take pleasure to think there are some men that perhaps outdo them in wickedness, and offend in some grosser kind than they have done. And so they have, they count, a grateful occasion, not only to justify themselves, that they are not worse than other men; but to magnify themselves, that they are not so bad; as the Pharisee, in his pompous, hypocritical devotion: "God, I thank thee," (that attribution to God being only made a colour of arrogating more plausibly to himself), "that I am not as other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers;"[2] etc., whereby the hypocrite, while he would extol, doth but the more notoriously stigmatize himself.

3. From a disaffection they bear to the offenders, whence they are glad of an advantage against them; that they have occasion to glory in their flesh and insult over their weakness.

It must be that rejoicing in other men's sins which is *most* contrary to charity, that is here more especially meant. And that is manifestly the *last* of these, such as proceeds from

[1] Rom. i. 32. [2] Luke xviii. 11.

ill-will to the person that offends; whereupon we are glad of his halting,—which perhaps we watched for before,—and when his foot slippeth, magnify ourselves against him. Now rejoicing at the sins of other men upon this account, may be either *secret*, when only the heart *feels* an inward complacency and is sensibly gratified thereby; or *open*, when that inward pleasure breaks forth into *external expressions* of triumph and insultation, into derision, scoffs, and sarcasms.

Secondly. And how inconsistent this is with the charity which our apostle so highly magnifies, it is now our next business to show. And it will appear by comparing this rejoicing in other men's sins with charity itself, and with what it is ever in most certain connexion with.

I. With *charity itself:* and so we shall consider it, first in its own nature abstractly and absolutely; secondly in relation to its original and exemplary cause; and shall compare this rejoicing in the sins of other men with it both ways.

1. Consider charity in *its own nature:* and so, it is the loving another as myself, so as to desire his welfare and felicity as my own; where we must note, that love to ourselves is the measure of the love we owe to others. But yet we are also to consider that this measure itself is to be measured; for we are not to measure our love to others by the love we bear to ourselves otherwise than as that also agrees with our superior rule, which obliges us so to love ourselves as to design and seek our own true felicity and best good,—to "lay hold on eternal life," to "work out our own salvation." If in other instances we were not so to understand the matter,—since the particular precepts extend no farther than the general one,—any man might, without transgression, destroy another man's goods, when he hath learned to be prodigal of what he is master of himself; and might make himself master of another man's life, whensoever he cares not for his own. And so by how much more profligately wicked any man is, he should be so much the less a transgressor.

We are not so absolutely *αὐτεξούσιοι*, or so much our own,

that we may do what we will with ourselves. We are accountable to Him that made us for our usage of ourselves; and in making ourselves miserable, make ourselves deeply guilty also. We were made with a possibility of being happy. He that made us with souls capable of a blessed state, will exact an account of us what we have done with his creature. He that commits a felony upon his own life injures his prince and the community to which he belongs. The one is robbed of a subject, the other of a member, that might be useful; wherein both had a right. No man is made for himself: and therefore the fact is animadverted on and punished, as far as is possible, in what remains of the offender;—in his posterity, from whom his goods are confiscate; in his name, which bears a mark of infamy and is made a public reproach. How unspeakably greater is the wrong done to the common Ruler of the whole world, when a soul destroys itself; loses its possibility of praising and glorifying him eternally, in the participation and communion of his eternal glory! how great to the glorious society of saints and angels, from whom he factiously withdraws himself, and who—though that loss be recompensed to them by their satisfaction in the just vengeance which the offended God takes upon the disloyal, apostate wretch—were to have pleased and solaced themselves in his joint felicity with their own! So that he hath done what in him lay to make them miserable, and even to turn heaven into a place of mourning and lamentation.

The supreme, primary law under which we all are, obliges us to be happy: for it binds us to take "the Lord only for our God;" to "love him with all our hearts, and minds, and souls, and strength;" and so to love him is to enjoy him, to delight and acquiesce finally and ultimately in him, and satisfy ourselves for ever in his fulness. So that every man is rebellious in being miserable, and that even against the first and most deeply fundamental law of his creation. Nor can he love God in obedience to that law, without loving himself aright: which love to himself is then to be the measure of the love he is to bear to other men; and so most truly it is

said, that 'charity begins at home.' Every man ought to seek his own true felicity, and then to desire another's as his own.

But now consider what we are to compare herewith. Rejoicing in the sins of other men,—how contrary is it to the most inward nature, to the pure essence, how directly doth it strike at the very heart and soul, the life and spirit, of charity! For sin is the greatest and highest infelicity of the creature; depraves the soul within itself, vitiates its powers, deforms its beauty, extinguisheth its light, corrupts its purity, darkens its glory, disturbs its tranquillity and peace, violates its harmonious, joyful state and order, and destroys its very life; it disaffects it to God, severs it from him, engages his justice and inflames his wrath against it.

What is it now, to rejoice in another man's sin? Think what it is, and how impossible it is to be where the love of God hath any place. What! to be glad that such a one is turning a *man* into a *devil!*—a reasonable, immortal soul, capable of heaven, into a fiend of hell! to be glad that such a soul is tearing itself off from God, is blasting its own eternal hopes and destroying all its possibilities of a future well-being! Blessed God! how repugnant is this to charity!

For let us consider what it is that we can set in directest opposition to it. Let charity be the loving of another as I ought to do myself; its opposite must be the hating of another, as I should not and cannot sustain to do myself. As loving another therefore includes my desire of his felicity, and whatsoever is requisite to it till it be attained, and my joy for it when it is; loathness of his future and grief for his present infelicity, as if the case were my own: so hating another must equally and most essentially include aversion to his future good, and grief for his present,—which is the precise notion of envy; the desire of his infelicity and whatsoever will infer it, till it be brought about; and joy when it is, or when I behold what is certainly conjunct with it;—which is the very wickedness the text animadverts on as

most contrary to charity; the ἐπιχαιρεκακία, which not only the Spirit of God in the Holy Scriptures, but the very philosophy of pagans doth most highly decry and declaim against; which is of the same family, you see, with envy, and no other way differs from it than as the objects are variously posited. Let the harm and evil of my brother be remote from him, and his good be present, I envy it; let his good be remote, and any harm or mischief be present and urgent upon him, I rejoice in it. Both are rooted in hatred,—the directest violation of the 'royal law' of loving my neighbour as myself.[1] And it is that sort of ἐπιχαιρεκακία which hath most of horror, and the very malignity of hell in it; as the sin of another wherein this joy is taken is an evil against the great God, (which there will be occasion more directly to consider hereafter,) as well as to him that commits it,—a wrong to the former and a hurt to the latter; whereas other infelicities are evils to him only whom they befall.

2. Consider charity in *relation to its original and exemplar.* And so it is immediately from God, and his very image: "God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him."[2] And what sort of love is this, which is made so identical and the same thing with the very being and the nature of God? Not a turbid and tumultuous, not a mean and ignoble, not an imprudent, rash, and violent, least of all an impure, polluted passion; but a most calm, wise, majestic, holy will to do good to his creatures upon terms truly worthy of God,—good-will most conjunct with the other inseparable perfections of the Godhead: whence, with the expressions of the most benign propensions towards his creatures, he still conjoins declarations of his hatred of sin upon all occasions; that he is not a God that takes pleasure in wickedness, nor can evil dwell with him; that sin is the abominable thing which his soul loathes; that he is of purer eyes than to look on iniquity. What can now be more contrary to the pure and holy love which shall resemble and be the image of his, than to rejoice in iniquity? for as God, while he loves the

[1] James ii. 8. [2] 1 John iv. 16.

person, hates the sin, men do in this case love the sin and hate the person.

And while this horrid, impure malignity is not from God or like him,—far be the thought from us!—from whom doth it derive? whom doth it resemble? We read but of two general fathers, whose children are specified and distinguished even by this very thing or its contrary, in a fore-mentioned text;[1] where, when both the fathers and their children are set in opposition to one another, this of not loving one's brother is given at once, both as the *separating note* of them who are not of God's family and offspring,—"not of him," as the expression is,—having nothing of his holy, blessed image and nature in them, and who consequently must fetch their pedigree from hell and acknowledge themselves spawned of the devil; and as a *summary of all unrighteousness*, as it is,—being taken (as often) for the duty of the second table, or as a very noted part of it taken in its utmost latitude; agreeably to that of our Saviour,[2] "Ye are of your father the devil . . . . he was a murderer from the beginning;" as every one is said to be that hateth his brother.[3] If therefore, we can reconcile God and the devil together, heaven and hell, we may also charity and rejoicing at other men's sins.

II. The inconsistency of these two will further appear, by comparing this monstrous disaffection of mind with the *inseparable concomitants of charity*, or such things as are in connexion with it. And the argument thence will be also strong and enforcing, if that concomitancy shall be found to be certain and the connexion firm between those things and charity.

I shall only give instance in four things which every one that examines will acknowledge to be so connected; namely, wisdom and prudence,—piety and sincere devotedness to God and the Redeemer,—purity,—and humility. Moralists generally acknowledge a concatenation of the virtues. Those that are truly Christian are not the less connected, but the more strongly and surely: which connexion of these now men-

[1] 1 John iii. 10. [2] John viii. 44. [3] 1 John iii. 15.

tioned with charity, we shall see as to each of them severally, and at the same time their inconsistency with this vile temper and practice.

1. For *wisdom* or *prudence*, it is so nearly allied to charity that it is mentioned by the same name:[1] "The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle," etc. The foregoing words[2] show that love is meant. These words represent the heavenly descent and the true nature of it both together. That it is called 'wisdom,' shows its affinity with it, and that it partakes of its nature; dwells in a calm, sedate mind, void of disquieting passions and perturbations, which it is the work of wisdom to repress and expel. Indeed the name is manifestly intended to express generally the temper, the genius, the spirit of one that is born from above, and is tending thither. The contrary temper, a disposition to strife, envy, or grief for the good of another,—which naturally turns into joy for his evil when his ease alters,—is called 'wisdom' too, but with sufficiently distinguishing and disgracing additions. It is said, "not to be from above, but earthly, sensual, devilish;"[3] and to have the contrary effects: "Where envy and strife is, there is confusion,"—ἀκαταστασία, 'tumult,' the word signifies; or disorder, unquietness, disagreement of a man with himself, as if his soul were plucked asunder, torn from itself,—"and every evil work."[4]

There can be no charity towards another, as hath been noted, where there is not first a true love to a man's own soul, which is the immediate measure of it; nor *that*, where there is not prudence to discern his own best good, and what means are to be used to attain it. His true good he is not to expect apart by himself, but as a member of the Christian community; not of this or that party, but the whole animated body of Christ. In which capacity he shares in the common felicity of the whole and affects to draw as many as he can into the communion and participation of it. So he enjoys, as a member of that body, a tranquillity and repose within him-

[1] James iii. 17. [2] Ver. 16. [3] Ver. 15. [4] Ver. 16.

self. But he is undone in himself while he bears a disaffected mind to the true interest and welfare of the body.

Wherefore, to rejoice in what is prejudicial to it, is contrary to prudence and charity both at once. "Put on," saith the apostle, "as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body;"[1]—implying no true peace or satisfaction can be had but in vital union with the body. Is he a wise, or is he not a mad, man, that rejoices he hath an unsound hand or foot, or an ulcerated finger or toe rotting off from him? or that is glad a fire or the plague is broken out in the neighbourhood, that equally endangers his own house and family, yea, and his own life?

2. *Piety* and devotedness to God and the Redeemer is most conjunct with true charity: "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God,"[2] etc. For the true reason of our love to the one is fetched from the other, as hath been shown. And how absurd were it to pretend love to a Christian upon Christ's account and for his sake, while there is no love to Christ himself? But can it consist with such love and devotedness to God, to be glad at his being affronted by the sin of any man? or to Christ,—whose design it was to redeem us from all iniquity and to bless us in turning us away from our iniquities,—to rejoice in the iniquity that obstructs and tends to frustrate His design? Do we not know He was for this end manifested, to destroy the works of the devil, and that the works of wickedness are his works? Do we not know the great God is, in and by our Redeemer, maintaining a war against the devil and the subjects of his kingdom; in which warfare, what are the weapons on the devil's part but sins? who but sinners his soldiers? And

[1] Col iii. 12—16. [2] 1 John v. 2.

who is there of us but professes to be on God's part in this war? Can it stand with our duty and fidelity to Him, to be glad that any are foiled who profess to fight under the same banner? What would be thought of him who in battle rejoiceth to see those of his own side fall, here one, and there one? He would surely be counted either treacherous or mad!

3. Charity of the right kind is most certainly connected with *purity*. "The end" (or 'perfection') "of the commandment," or of all our commanded obedience, "is charity, out of a pure heart."[1] Sincere Christians are such as have "purified their souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit, unto unfeigned love of the brethren;" and must see that they "love one another with a pure heart fervently."[2] Pagans have taught there is no such thing as true friendly love but among good men. But how consists it with such purity to take pleasure in other men's impurities, or make their sin the matter of jest and raillery?

4. A further inseparable concomitant of charity is deep *humility*. We find them joined, and are required to put them on together, in the already mentioned context, "Put on kindness, humbleness of mind; above all, put on charity:"[3] and do find it among these celebrations of charity, that it "vaunteth not itself, and is not puffed up."[4] Nor can we ever with due charity compassionate the wants and infirmities of others, if we feel not our own; which if we do, though we are not ourselves guilty of heinous wickednesses, we shall so entirely ascribe it to Divine, preserving mercy, as to be in little disposition to rejoice that others are.

Use.—We may then upon the whole learn hence, how we are to demean ourselves in reference to the sins of other men: so, no doubt, as charity doth command and require; at least so as it doth allow, or not forbid. We are manifestly concerned not to offer violence to so sacred a thing, and shall be secure from doing it both these ways. We may therefore under these two heads, take direction for our behaviour upon

[1] 1 Tim. i. 5. [2] 1 Pet. i. 22. [3] Col. iii. [4] 1 Cor. xiii. 4.

such occasions; namely, the actual sins of others or their more observable inclinations thereto:

1. We should faithfully practise as to this case such things as charity and the very law of love doth expressly require and oblige us to; as we are,—

i. To take heed of *tempting their inclinations*, and of inducing others to sin, whether by word or example. We are otherwise obliged to avoid doing so, and this greatly increases the obligation. What we are not to rejoice in upon the account of charity, we are upon the same account much less to procure. Especially take heed of contributing to other men's sins by the example of your own; the power whereof, though it be silent and insensible, is most efficacious in all men's experience. A man would perhaps hear the verbal proposal of that wickedness with horror and detestation, which he is gradually and with little reluctance drawn into by observing it in other men's practice. A downright exhortation to it would startle him; but the conversation of such as familiarly practise it gently insinuates, and by slower degrees alters the habit of his mind, secretly conveys an infection like a pestilential disease: so that the man is mortally seized before he feels and when he suspects no danger.

Most of all, let them take heed of mischieving others by *their* sins, who are men of more knowledge and pretend to more strictness than others. Perhaps some such may think of taking their liberty more safely; they understand how to take up the business more easily, and compound the matter with God. A horrid imagination; and direct blasphemy against the holy gospel of our Lord! If it were true, and God should do what is so little to be hoped,—mercifully give them the repentance whereof they most wickedly presume; who knows but others may by that example be hardened in wickedness and never repent? Yea, if thy greater knowledge should prompt thee to do unnecessarily, that which really and abstracting from circumstances is not a sin, but which another took to be so, and thence takes a liberty to do

other things that are certainly sinful, yet walkest thou not charitably: "Through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish and be destroyed, for whom Christ died?"[1] Suppose the process be,—as from sitting in an idol's temple, to idolatry,—so from needless sitting in a tavern, to drunkenness, or other consequent debaucheries. But if the thing be in its first instance unquestionably sinful, of how horrid consequences are the enormities of such as have been taken to be men of sanctity beyond the common rate! What a stumbling-block to multitudes! How much better might it have been for many that are of the Christian profession, if *such* had never been Christians,—and most probably for themselves also! No doubt it had been more for the honour of the Christian name. How many may be tempted to infidelity and atheism by one such instance! And whereas those scandalized persons do often afterwards incur this fearful guilt of rejoicing in the iniquity of such, even *that* also they have to answer for with all the rest.

ii. Charity requires, not only that we do not procure, but that we labour as much as is possible to *prevent*, the sin of others. What in this kind we are not to rejoice at, we should hinder: and indeed what we do not hinder, if it be in our power, we cause.

iii. We should not be over forward to *believe ill* of others. Charity will, while things are doubtful at least, suspend. See how immediately conjunct these two things are: It "thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity;"[2] it is not imaginative or surmising. And in the following verse, (on the better part, it must be understood,) it "believeth all things, hopeth all things;" — that is briefly, it is unapt to believe ill without ground, and hopes well as long as there is any. But it is not so blindly partial as to shut its eyes against apparent truth; — of which more in its place.

iv. Much less should we *report things* at random, to the prejudice of others. That character of an inhabitant in the

[1] Rom. xiv. 15, with 1 Cor. viii. 10, 11.

[2] 1 Cor. xiii. 5, 6.

"holy hill" must not be forgotten,—"That taketh not up a reproach against his neighbour."

v. If the matter particularly concerns ourselves, and circumstances comply, we must have recourse first to the supposed offender himself, and, as our Saviour directs: "*Tell him his fault* between thee and him alone." [1]

vi. We ought to *compassionate his case*. Not rejoicing in iniquity may have it in a μείωσις. More may be meant; we are sure more is elsewhere enjoined—solemn mourning,—and the omission severely blamed. "Ye are puffed up," (not perhaps so much with pride as vanity and lightness of spirit, as a bladder swollen with air, — which is the significancy of that word,) "and have not rather mourned." [2] Perhaps he is burdened with grief and shame. A Christian heart cannot be hard towards such a one in that case. We are to "bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." [3]

vii. We should, as our capacity and circumstances invite or allow, (at least by our prayers), *endeavour his recovery;* and therein use all the gentleness which the case admits and which is suitable to a due sense of common human frailty. Take the instruction in the apostle's own words, "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such a one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted." [4]

viii. We must take heed, upon one man's account, of *censuring others;* for such as we know to be faulty, those that for aught we know, and therefore ought to hope, are innocent: a practice most absurd and unrighteous, contrary to common reason and justice, as well as charity; yet that whereto some are apt to assume a licence, upon so slender and senseless a pretence:—that is, because some have, under a show of piety, hidden the impurities of a secretly vicious life; others that are openly profane and lead notoriously lewd and flagitious lives, (who, though bad enough, are so far the honester men,) do add to all their

[1] Matt. xviii. 15. [2] 1 Cor. v. 2. [3] Gal. vi. 2. [4] Verse 1.

other wickedness that folly and madness, as to count all men hypocrites that are not as bad as themselves, and reckon there is no such thing as real religion in the world! A like case as if, because sometimes spectres have appeared in human shape, one should conclude there is therefore no such creature on earth as a very man.

2. But there are also other things that ought to come into practice in the case of other men's sinning, very suitable to the case, and not unsuitable to charity: which, though they proceed more directly rather from some other principle, yet are not inconsistent with this,—as the graces of God's Spirit and the duties of Christians never interfere, so as to obstruct or hinder one another,—things which, though charity do not expressly command, yet are otherwise commanded, and which charity doth not forbid; as,—

i. That we labour to *avoid the contagion of their example;* —that we take not encouragement to sin from their sinning. They are not our rule. "We have not so learned Christ."

ii. That we *take warning by it;* and endeavour that their example may not only not be tempting to us, but that it may be monitory. We should reckon such things are our examples, for this purpose; and were not only heretofore recorded and written, but they are also in our own days permitted to fall out, for our admonition.[1] We that think we stand, should therefore take heed lest we fall; and must remember we are to "stand by faith," and are not to be "high-minded, but fear." It is a costly instruction that is given us in such instances. Consider the dolour and pangs that they may perhaps endure who are our monitors. If they do not cry to us to beware, their case doth. Reckon, as the psalmist, it is "good for you to draw near to God;" they that are "far from him shall perish."[2] Labour to be sincere, living Christians. Let me tell you what I have often inculcated: A mere form of godliness will one time or other betray you: and that it is not being of this or that party, conjoined with a formal, lifeless religion, that will secure you from being public

[1] 1 Cor. x. 11. [2] Ps. lxxiii. 27, 28.

scandals on earth and accursed wretches in hell. Let every one prove his own work, and make thorough work of it; so shall he have rejoicing in himself, and not in another,[1]—yea, though he may have much cause of mourning for another,—for every one must at last "bear his own burden," and "give an account of himself to God."

iii. Seriously *bless God for being kept* from gross and scandalous enormities. Such words savour well,—spoken with deep humility, and unfeigned sense of Divine favour, not with pharisaical ostentation and scorn,—"God, I thank thee, I am not as other men." If the poor man was so transported and poured out his soul in tears of gratitude to God, upon the sight of a toad, that he was not such a creature; how much more cause is there for it upon the sight of a gross sinner! For I should think,—'Who made me differ? Why was not I the example, and reduced to such a condition;—before which I would prefer the greatest sinless misery in all the world?'

There is a threefold degree of mercy in our preservation from more heinous and reproachful wickedness. We may owe it to *nature*, that less inclines us to some sins, as gluttony, drunkenness, etc.; to external *succedaneous providence*, that keeps us out of the way of temptation; or to *victorious grace*, able to prevail both against corrupt inclinations of nature, and whatsoever temptations also. God is to be acknowledged in all. He is the author of nature, the ruler in providence, the fountain of grace. Under the first of these notions he ought more to be eyed and praised than the most are aware of. I could tell you if it were seasonable, of some (and no despicable) heathen philosophy, which speaks of such an *εὐφυΐα* or goodness of natural temper (though the word hath also another signification) that is said to carry in it a sort of seminal probity and virtue; which, when it shall be observed how some others have the seeds of grosser vitiosity and of all imaginable calamities more plentifully sown in their natures, there is no little reason to be thankful for. Though

[1] Gal. vi. 4.

all are bad enough by nature to be children of wrath, and for ever miserable, without special mercy; and though again none have so bad natures as to be thereby excusable in wickedness—they should endeavour and seek relief the more earnestly—yet some are less bad and their case more remediable by ordinary means: and therefore the difference should be acknowledged with gratitude.

And surely there is no small mercy in being kept out of the way of temptation by the dispensation of a more favourable providence, that orders more advantageously the circumstances of their conditions in the world, so as they are less exposed to occasions of sin than others are: which providence I call succedaneous, for distinction's sake; because even the difference of natural tempers is owing to a former providence. But now, who can tell what they should be or do, in such circumstances as *might* have befallen them? It is a singular favour not to be exposed to a dangerous trial, whereof we know not the issue. Nor yet should any satisfy themselves without that grace which can stem the tide: which they that possess, how should they adore the God of all grace!

iv. Charity doth not forbid, and the case itself requires, that when others do grossly and scandalously sin, we should at length, upon plain evidence, *admit a conviction of the matter of fact.* For otherwise we cannot perform the other duty towards them unto which charity doth most expressly oblige; nor discharge a higher duty, which another love requires that ought to be superior to all other. No charity can oblige me to be blind, partial, unjust, untrue to the interest of God and religion. When we are told in the text, it "rejoiceth not in iniquity," it is added in the next breath, it "rejoiceth in the truth;" that is, in equity and righteous dealing. We are not to carry alike to good men and bad; and are therefore sometime to distinguish them if there be a visible ground for it, or to take notice when they manifestly distinguish themselves: for it is necessary to what is next to ensue, namely, that,—

v. We are to *decline their society;* that is, when their heinous guilt appears and while their repentance appears not. Scripture is so plain and copious to this purpose, that it would suppose them very ignorant of the Bible, for whom it should be needful to quote texts. We must avoid them for *our own* sake, that we be not infected nor be partakers in their sin and guilt; for *theirs*—and so charity requires it—that they may be ashamed,—which may be the means of their reduction and salvation; and, which is most considerable, for the *honour of the Christian religion*, that it may be vindicated and rescued from reproach as much as in us lies. It ought to be very grievous to us, when the reproach of our religion cannot be rolled away without being rolled upon this or that man; if especially otherwise valuable. But what reputation ought to be of that value with us, as His that bought us with his blood? The great God is our example, who refuses the fellowship of apostate persons, yea, and churches; departs and withdraws his affronted glory. It is pure, and declines all taint. When high indignities are offered, it takes just offence, and with a majestic shyness retires. None have been so openly owned by the Lord of glory, as that he will countenance them in wickedness. Though Coniah, he tells us,—expressing a contempt by curtailing his name,—were the signet on his right hand, yet would he pluck him thence. Yea, and our Saviour directs, if our right hand itself prove offensive, we must "cut it off and cast it from us."[1] And to the same purpose—in the next words after he had said, "Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh,"—*he says* "Wherefore, if thy hand offend,"[2] etc. It must be done as to a hand, a limb of our body, with great tenderness, sympathy, and sense of smart and pain; but it must be done. 'Dilectionem audio, non communicationem;' —'I hear of love, not communion,' saith an ancient upon this occasion.[3]

vi. We must *take heed of despondency* by reason of the sins

[1] Matt. v. 30. [2] Chap. xviii. 7, 8. [3] Tertullian.

of others, or of being discouraged in the way of godliness; much more of being diverted from it. Indeed the greatest temptation which this case gives hereunto, is to this purpose very inconsiderable and contemptible;—that is, that by reason of the ἀσελγείαις, 'lascivious ways,' of some, (as that word signifies, and is fittest to be read,—referred to the impurities of the Gnostics, as they came to be called,) "the way of truth," that is, Christianity itself, "is evil spoken of."[1] But this ought to be heard, in respect of the scoffers themselves with great pity; but in respect of their design to put serious Christians out of their way, with disdain, and with as little regard or commotion of mind as would be occasioned—so one well expresses it—to a traveller, intent upon his journey, by the mows and grimaces of monkeys or baboons.

Shall I be disquieted, grow weary, and forsake my way, because an unwary person stumbles and falls in it; and one ten times worse, and more a fool than he, laughs at him for it? We must in such cases mourn indeed for both, but not faint. And if we mourn upon a true account, we shall easily apprehend it, in its cause, very separable from fainting and despondency. It is a discouraging thing for any party to be stigmatized and have an ill mark put upon them, from the defection of this or that person among them, that was perhaps what he seemed not or was little thought to be. But if we be more concerned for the honour of the Christian name than of any one party in the world, our mourning will not be principally upon so private an account. All wise and good men, that understand the matter, will heartily concur with us and count themselves obliged to do so. None that are such, or any man that hath the least pretence to reason, justice, or common sense, will ever allow themselves to turn the faults of this or that particular person (that are discountenanced as soon as they are known) to the reproach of a party. For others that are aptest to do so—men of debauched minds and manners—with whom, not being of this or that

[1] 2 Pet. ii. 2.

party, but religion itself, is a reproach; I would advise all serious and sober-minded Christians, of whatsoever way or persuasion, if they be twitted with the wickedness of any that seem to be such and were not, to tell the revilers, 'They are more akin to you than to us, and were more of your party, howsoever they disguised themselves, than of any other we know of.'

And if yet after all this, any will give themselves the liberty to rejoice at the sins of other men, and make them the matter of their sport and divertisement, or take any the least pleasure in observing them, I have but these two things, in the general, to say to them: You have no reason to rejoice; you have great reason for the contrary.

1. You have no reason to rejoice: for, produce your cause; let us hear your strong reasons:—

i. Is it that such are like you, and as bad men as yourselves? But what if they be *not* like you? Every one perhaps is not, at whose sins, real or supposed, you at a venture take liberty to rejoice. What if your guilt be real, theirs but imagined? Sometimes, through your too much haste, it may prove so; and then your jest is spoiled and you are found to laugh only at your own shadow. At least you cannot, many times, so certainly know another's guilt as you may your own; and so run the hazard—which a wise man would not—of making yourselves the ridicule. And supposing your guess, in any part, hit right;—what if those others sin by surprise, you by design? they in an act, you in a course? they in one kind of lewdness, you in every kind? they sin and are penitent, you sin and are obdurate? they return, you persevere? they are ashamed, you glory? These are great differences, if they are really to be found, in any such case. But,—

If they be not found, and those others be like you throughout, every whit as bad as yourselves; this is sure no great matter of glorying,—that I am not the very worst thing in all the world, the vilest creature that ever God made! Should it be a solace to me also that there are devils, who may

perhaps be somewhat worse than they or I? Nor though they fall in never so entirely with you in all points of wickedness, will that much mend your matter. Can their wit, added to yours, prove there will be no judgment-day or that there is no God? Or, if that performance fail, can their power and yours defend you against the Almighty? "Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not go unpunished." Or again,—

ii. Suppose you are not of the debauched crew: is this your reason why you at least think you may indulge yourself some inward pleasure,—that wickedness, you observe, breaks out among them who are of a distinct party from you, which you count may signify somewhat to the better reputation of your own?

But are you then of a party of which you are sure there are no ill men? There are too many faults among all parties; but, God knows, it is fitter for us all to mend than to recriminate. 'Yea, but the party we are of, professes not so much strictness.' No! What party should you be of, that professes less strictness? What more lax rule of morals have you than other Christians? Do you not profess subjection to the known rules of the Bible concerning Christian and civil conversation? You do not sure, profess rebellion and hostility against the Lord that bought you! Doth not your baptismal covenant, which you are supposed to avow, bind you to as much strictness as any other Christian? And can there be any other more sacred bond?

But if, in other things than matters of civil conversation, such delinquent persons were of a stricter profession,—suppose it be in matters of religion and worship,—doth that delinquency prove that in those other things you are in the right and they are in the wrong? Doth the wickedness of any person against the rules of the common, as well as his own stricter, profession, prove the profession he is of to be false? Then, wherein the profession of Protestants is stricter than of other Christians, the notorious sins of wicked Protestants will conclude against the whole profession! And the

wickedness of a Christian, because Christianity is a stricter profession than paganism, will prove the Christian religion to be false! Who doubts but there may be found of the Roman communion better men than some Protestants; and of pagans better men than some Christians? But then they are better only in respect of some things wherein all Christians, or all men, do agree in their sentiments; not in respect of the things wherein they differ: and the others are worse in things that have no connexion with the matter of difference. Enough is to be found to this purpose in some of the ancients, writing on the behalf of Christians, which we need not in so plain a case. Nor can it be thought that men of any understanding and sobriety will make this any argument, one way or other; or think them at all justifiable that glory in other men's wickedness, upon this or any other account. For such therefore as are of so ill a mind, and think being of a different party gives them licence, they ought to know they make themselves of the same party, and that upon a worse account than any difference in the rituals of religion can amount to. Upon the whole, your reason then, allege what you will, is no reason, and argues nothing but shortness of discourse and want of reason; or that you would fain say something to excuse an ill practice, when you have nothing to say. But I must add,—

2. That you have much reason to the contrary, both upon the common account and your own:—

i. Upon the *common account:* that the Christian world should, while it is so barren of serious Christians, be so fertile and productive of such monsters,—made up of the sacred Christian profession conjoined with even worse than paganish lives! And the more of sanctity any pretend to, the more deplorable is the case, when the wickedness breaks forth that was concealed before under the vizor of that pretence. Is this no matter of lamentation to you? Or will you here again say your unrelatedness to their party makes you unconcerned? If it do not justify your rejoicing, it will sure, you think, excuse your not mourning. Will it so indeed?

Who made you of a distinct party? Are you not a Christian? or are you not a Protestant?—And what do you account that, but reformed, primitive Christianity? And so, the more it is reformed, the more perfectly it is itself. Who put it into your power to make distinguishing additions to the Christian religion, by which to sever yourselves from the body of other Christians in the world, so as not to be concerned in the affairs of the body? If this or that member say, 'I am not of the body;' is it therefore not of the body? Is it not the *Christian name* that is dishonoured by the scandalous lives of them that bear that name? Whose laws are they that are broken,—the laws of this or that party? or are they not the laws of Christ? Will you say you are unrelated to him too, or have no concern with him? Can any party be united within itself by so sacred ties as all true Christians are with the whole body of Christ? I know no way you have to be unconcerned in such cases as the matter of your humiliation,—when they occur within your notice,—but by renouncing your Christianity. Nor indeed would that serve the turn. For what will you do with your humanity? Are you not still a man, if you would be no longer a Christian? And even that, methinks, should oblige us to bewail the depravedness and dishonour of the nature and order of human creatures; that they who were made for the society of angels, yea, and of the blessed God himself, should be found delighting and wallowing in worse impurities than those of the dog or swine.

The more strictness in morals they have falsely pretended to, the greater is your obligation to lament their violating those sacred rules which you also profess to be subject to,—and not the less. Do I need to tell you, that even among pagans, where a profession of greater strictness had once been entered into, an apostasy to gross immoralities hath been the matter of very solemn lamentation? As in the school (or church should I call it?) of Pythagoras; where, when any that had obliged themselves to the observation of his virtuous precepts, did afterwards lapse into a vicious

course, a funeral and solemn mourning was held for them, as if they were dead.[1]

ii. On *your own:* for, when our Saviour saith, "Woe to that man by whom offence cometh," doth he not also say, "Woe to the world because of offences?" And who would not fear and lament his share in that woe? Are you proof against all hurt by another's sin? What if it encourage you to sin too? what if it harden you in it? How many do some men's sins dispose to atheism, and to think there is nothing in religion! And if you felt in yourselves an inclination to rejoice in them, *that* itself argues the infection hath caught upon you, seized your spirits, and corrupted your vitals: so that you have cause to lament even your having rejoiced; to "be afflicted, and mourn, and weep; to turn your laughter to mourning, and your joy to heaviness."[2] One would think them, indeed, but half men, and scarce any Christians, that can allow themselves so inhuman and unhallowed a pleasure as rejoicing in another's sin. It is very unworthy of a man, to take pleasure in seeing his fellow-man turning beast. There is little in it of the ingenuity that belongs to human nature, to delight in the harms of others; much less of the prudence, to make sport of a common mischief. And would a Christian rejoice in the disadvantages of his own cause, and in the dishonour and reproach of the very name which he himself bears?

To conclude: one would think no more should be needful to repress in any this ill inclination than to consider,—what sin is, wherein they rejoice; and what charity is, which is violated by their doing so.

What! to rejoice *in sin?* that despites the Creator, and hath wrought such tragedies in the creation! that turned angels out of heaven, man out of paradise! that hath made the blessed God so much a stranger to our world; broken off the intercourse, in so great part, between heaven and earth; obstructed the pleasant commerce which had otherwise probably been between angels and men! so vilely debased

[1] Jambl. *De Vit. Pyth.*

[2] James iv. 9.

the nature of man and provoked the displeasure of his Maker against him! that once overwhelmed the world in a deluge of water, and will again ruin it by as destructive fire! To rejoice in so hateful a thing is to do that mad part, to "cast about firebrands, arrows, and death, and say, 'Am not I in sport?'"

And to do that which so highly offends against *charity!* so divine a thing! the offspring of God! the birth of heaven, as it is here below among us mortals! the beauty and glory of it, as it is there above in its natural seat! the eternal bond of living union among the blessed spirits that inhabit there, and which would make our world, did it universally obtain in it, another heaven!

Consider from whom and from what region that must proceed, which is so contrary to God and heaven!

If any will yet, in despite of Divine love itself, laugh on at so foul and frightful a thing as sin is, it is too likely to prove the Sardonian laughter; that is, as some explain that proverb, of them that die laughing, conclude their lives and their laughter both together, and only cease to laugh and to live in the same last breath.

THE RIGHT

USE OF THAT ARGUMENT IN PRAYER,

FROM THE

NAME OF GOD;

ON BEHALF OF A PEOPLE THAT PROFESS IT.

THE PREFACE.

No sort of men have ever pretended to religion, who have not allowed unto prayer a very eminent place in it. And so much a deeper and more potent principle is religion in the nature of man than reason,—though both are miserably perverted and enfeebled,—that the former doth secretly prompt men, especially in great distresses, to pray, and expect relief by prayer, when the way wherein it is efficacious cannot so well be explicated or apprehended by the other.

And as prayer hath ever been reckoned a very principal part of religion, so hath intercession for others been wont to be accounted a very fit and proper part of prayer.

In the general, prayer is most evidently a duty of natural religion, a dictate of nature, which every man's own mind suggests to him or may be appealed to about it;—"Should not a people seek unto their God?" Whence that personated, eloquent patron of the Christian cause,[1] urging, for the conviction of his heathen adversary, the common practice of people in their extremities to lift up, even untaught, their hands and eyes to heaven, fitly says of it, 'Vulgi iste naturalis est sermo,'—'That they do herein,—as it were, but speak the language of nature.'

Now, hereupon, the impression of that primitive law of nature,—not quite worn out from the mind of man even in this his very degenerate state,—"to love our neighbours as ourselves," doth, as a natural instinct, secretly prompt us to pray for others whom we cannot otherwise help,—especially such to whom we have more peculiar obligations, who are in a more especial sense our neighbours,—as, at least in our last necessities, we do for ourselves.

[1] Octav. apud Min. F.

In which recourse to God, whether for ourselves or others, we are led by a sense of our own impotency and dependent state, from a deeply inward apprehension of a Deity, that is (as Epicurus himself seems constrained to acknowledge concerning the idea of God) even proleptical, or such as prevents reason. So that we do not, being urged by the pinching necessity of the case, stay to deliberate and debate the matter with ourselves,—*how* this course should bring relief; do but even take it for granted that *it may*, by an apprehension that is earlier in us than any formal reasoning about it, and being prior to it, is also not suppressed by it, but prevails against it, if there be anything in reason objected, which we cannot so clearly answer.

Yet, when we do bring the matter to a rational discussion, we find that in our conception of God we have the apprehension of so perfect and excellent a nature, that we cannot suppose he should be moved by anything foreign to himself, or that we can inform him of anything he knew not before, or incline him to anything to which his own nature inclines him not: and therefore, that though the wise and apt course of his government over intelligent creatures requires that they should be apprehensive of their own concernments,—whether personal, or that belong to them as they are in communities,—and pay a solemn homage to his sovereign power and goodness by supplicating him about them, yet that if he hear their prayers, it must not be for their sakes, but his own. Therefore also it cannot, upon strictest reasoning, but seem most dutiful to him and hopeful for ourselves, that our prayers should be conceived after such a tenour as may be most agreeable unto that apprehension.

The Holy Scriptures and the Divine Spirit do both aim at the recovery of apostate man, and the repairing the decays of his degenerate nature; and do therefore, (besides what was necessary to be added,) renew the dictates of the law of nature,—the one more expressly representing them, the other impressing them afresh, and re-implanting them in the hearts of all that are born of God. Therefore that external revelation of the mind and will of God doth direct, and his blessed Spirit, which is pleased to be in all his children the Spirit of grace and supplication, doth inwardly prompt them, not only to pray in reference to their single and common concernments, but to form their prayers after this tenour;

which is to be seen in their so frequent use of this argument in prayer, from the name of God.

Whereupon, in a time when we are so much concerned to be very instant in prayer, not only each of us for himself, but for the body of a people upon whom that holy name is called ; I reckoned it seasonable to show briefly the import and right use of this argument ; and to that purpose have taken for the ground the following text of Scripture.

PRAYER FROM THE NAME OF GOD.

JEREMIAH xiv. 21.

"DO NOT ABHOR US, FOR THY NAME'S SAKE."

WHERE we have a petition, and the argument enforcing it:—

First. A very serious petition, or a deprecation of the most fearful evil imaginable: "Do not abhor us." The word doth not merely signify abhorrence, but disdain;[1] a displeasure prevailing to that degree, and so fixed, as to infer rejection, even from a just sense of honour. So some of the versions read, "Reject us not," or "Cast us not forth," as we would do what or whom we despise and scorn to own:[2] as if it were feared the holy God might count it ignominious and a reproach to him to be further related to such a people, and might even be ashamed to be called their God; and consequently that the following argument is used not without some suspense of mind and doubt lest it should be turned against them,—whereof more hereafter. Here it is implied,—

I. To be no impossible thing that God should reject with abhorrence a people once his own, or that have been in peculiar *visible* relation to him. Prayer is conversant about matters of divine liberty;—that is, that are not known to us to be already determined this way or that; but that may be or may not be, as He pleases and sees fit, consistently with the settled course and order of things; not about things that he had before made ordinarily necessary, nor about things that are simply or in ordinary course impossible. In the former

[1] נָאַץ, sprevit, contempsit.

[2] Vulg. Lat. and Chald. Par.

case prayer would be needless; in the latter, to no purpose. We do not pray that the sun may rise to-morrow at the usual hour, or that the sea may ebb and flow, nor that they may be prevented doing so. But we must distinguish such necessity and impossibility from a mere certainty that things shall either be or not be. We are to pray, in the present case, with a deep apprehension that this is perfectly a matter of liberty with the great God, and that as he took such a people to be his of mere good pleasure,[1] so it depends wholly upon his mere pleasure that he continues the relation, when he might abandon and cast them off. It is further implied,—

II. That the more serious and apprehensive among such a people do understand it, at sometimes more especially, a thing very highly deserved, that God should abhor and reject them. The deprecation is a tacit acknowledgment that the deprecated severity was reasonably to be feared, not only from sovereign power, but offended justice. This is indeed expressed in the next foregoing words: "We acknowledge, O Lord, our wickedness, and the iniquity of our fathers; for we have sinned against thee: do not abhor us," etc. So that this ought to be the sense of the supplicants in the present case, that they are herein perfectly at mercy: that if they be heard, it is undeserved compassion; if they be rejected, it is from most deserved displeasure. And if it were not expressed, yet the supplication must be understood to imply it. For when the great God hath vouchsafed to limit his sovereign power and antecedent liberty by his promise and covenant, such a prayer were itself reflecting and an affront, if it should proceed upon a supposition, or but intimate, that he should ever be inclined to do such a thing without an excepted cause; such as that his rejecting them upon it might consist with his being faithful to his word: when he values himself so much upon his faithfulness, and seems even to lay his very Godhead upon it; as those strangely emphatical words import, "Know therefore that the Lord thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him,

[1] Deut. vii. 7; x. 15.

and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations;"[1] implying that he would even yield himself not to be God, if he did not in all points vindicate and demonstrate his faithfulness. Nor indeed do we properly crave for anything, but we therein disclaim a legal right to it, and acknowledge it to be rightfully in his power to whom we apply ourselves, to grant or deny;—we make demands from justice, and are supplicants for mercy. And with this sense the spirits of holy men have abounded, when they have taken upon them to intercede in the like case, as we see: "O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of faces, as at this day,"[2] etc.: and to the same purpose, Ezra ix., Neh. ix. at large, and in many other places;—as much as to say, 'Our only resort, O Lord, is to thy mercy; thou mightest most justly abhor and abandon us, and say to us, Lo-ammi, Ye are none of my people; but in the multitude of thy tender compassions and mercies do it not.' It is again further to be collected,—

III. That this is a thing which holy and good men do most vehemently dread and deprecate, namely, that God should thus abhor and reject a people so related to him. It is that which the very genius and spirit of holiness in the sincere, regrets beyond all things for themselves. They have taken the Lord to be their God for ever and ever; their hearts have been attempered to the tenour and constitution of an everlasting covenant, which they entered with no design or thought of ever parting; but that it should be the ground of an eternal relation. And the law of love written in their hearts prompts them to desire the same thing for others too,—especially such to whom they have more especial, endearing obligations,—and, if it were possible, that the whole body of a people to whom they are themselves united might all be united to God upon the same terms, even by the same vital and everlasting union: and therefore also, that same divine and soul-enlarging love, being a living principle in them, makes them have a most afflicting sense of any discerned

[1] Deut. vii. 9. [2] Dan. ix. 7.

tendencies to a rupture and separation, that might prevent and cut off the hope of his drawing still more and more of them into that inward, living union and intercourse with himself. These things it may suffice briefly to have noted from the *petition* in the text. That which I principally designed, is what we have next coming under our view, namely,—

Secondly. The argument brought to enforce it, "For thy name's sake!" about which, what I shall observe shall be with special reference to the case which the prophet refers unto in his present use of it; namely, that in praying for a people professing the name of God, that he would not reject and cast them off, the fit and proper argument to be insisted on is that from his own name.[1] And here it will be requisite to have some very brief consideration of this argument in the general, though we principally intend to treat of it as it respects this present case:—

I. In the general, we are to consider both what the name of God in itself imports, and what is signified by using it as an argument in prayer. And,—

1. As to what is imported by the name of God, in itself considered. We shall not trouble this discourse with the fancies of the rabbins: of whom yet one very noted soberly and plainly tells us the name of God is wont to signify His essence and truth, though the instance he gives shows he means it of the 'Nomen Tetragrammaton,'—the name Jehovah; which indeed more eminently doth so.[2] To our purpose it is obvious and sufficient to note that by His name, more generally, is signified both the peculiar excellencies of his nature and being, which are himself,—as the use of a man's name is to notify the man; so when He is pleased himself to proclaim his own name, thus it runs: "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin,"[3] etc.: and again, that by His name is meant his glory, and most especially the

[1] Jer. xiv. 9. [2] Maimon. Mor. Nevoch. [3] Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7.

honour and reputation of His government. For so too, a man's name signifies his fame and repute in the world; as they whom our translation calls "men of renown,"[1] the Hebrew text says only (but plainly meaning the same thing) they were "men of name." And if he be a public person, a prince and ruler over others, it must more peculiarly signify his reputation and fame as such. Thus Moses, designing to celebrate the unexceptionable equity and awful majesty of the Divine government, begins thus: "Because I will publish the name of the Lord: ascribe ye greatness unto our God. He is the Rock, his work is perfect; for all his ways are judgment."[2]

2. As an argument used in prayer, it may accordingly either signify *the principle from which* it is hoped and requested he should do what we desire, or *the end for which*. For as his name signifies his *nature*, which himself hath taught us primarily to conceive under the notion of goodness, mercy, love, in that forementioned * verse;*[3] so when we pray he would do this or that for his name's sake, the meaning may be, that we request he would do it for his mercy's sake; even in compliance with himself, and as it were to gratify his own nature, which, as nothing is more Godlike, is wont to be delighted in acts of goodness towards all; of compassion and mercy to the miserable, and of special favour to them that more peculiarly belong to him. And again; as his name signifies his *glory*, and principally the honour and reputation of his government, so when we pray he would do this for his name's sake, we further must be understood to mean, we desire he would do it to prevent his own dishonour, to augment his glory, and further to recommend himself to the world. And I conceive it must be meant in both these senses taken together; namely, that we pray he would do this or that, both from himself and for himself,—from his goodness, or indeed the general perfection of his nature, and for his glory, and that he may represent himself such as he truly is.

[1] Gen. vi. 4. [2] Deut. xxxii. 3, 4.
[3] Exod. xxxiv. 7; and 1 John iv. 16.

But some circumstances in the coherent verses, afterwards to be particularly noted, seem to intimate that the honour and dignity of his government is here more directly meant. His glory is indeed the end which he cannot but design in all that he does. For inasmuch as he is said to do all things "according to the counsel of his will,"[1] his will must be principally of the end, which is ever the highest and most excellent good; and that can be no other than himself, and that only as he is capable of greatening himself by his own action,—which cannot be in respect of intrinsic excellency, that being already perfect, and capable of no addition; therefore it must be in point of glory and reputation only: and so, as it is said, "Having no greater to swear by, he sware by himself."[2] So, having no greater to act for, it is most just and most worthy of him, and but a Godlike owning of himself, to act only to and for himself. And then whereas, having this constant, just, and holy will, he doth all things according to counsel in pursuance of it, it must signify that he ever takes the aptest and most proper methods for the advancing of his own glory,—the choosing the fittest and most suitable means to a fore-resolved end being the proper business and design of consultation; though that be spoken of God but allusively, and after the manner of men, who, by slow degrees, and by much deliberation, arrive to the very imperfect knowledge of things, which at one view he perfectly beholds from all eternity.

But also, how the great God designs his own glory in all that he doth, we must take great care be duly and decently understood. It were low and mean to think that the design of his mighty works and accurate dispensations, is only that he may fill men's minds with wonder, be highly thought of, admired, and celebrated in the world; which even a wise and virtuous man would think an end much beneath him. But the glory of his name must be understood to be primarily an objective glory, that shines with a constant and equal lustre in all his dispensations, whether men observe or observe

[1] Eph. i. 11. [2] Heb. vi. 13.

it not; and shines primarily to himself, so as that he hath the perpetual self-satisfaction of doing as truly becomes him, and what is in itself reputable, worthy of him, and apt to approve itself to a right mind,—as his own ever is, let men think of his ways as they please. Thus it was in his creating the world; when He had not yet made man, nor had him to look on as a witness and admirer of His other glorious works, it was enough to Him to be self-pleased that he saw them to be good, and that they had his own most just and complacential approbation. Nor is he less pleased with himself in his governing the world than he was in the making of it. As also good men, by how much the more they excel in goodness, have herein the greatest resemblance and imitation of God,—doing good for goodness' sake, and pleasing themselves with the lustre and beauty of their own actions shining to their own mind and conscience, and their discerned conformity to the steady rules of righteousness; without being concerned whether perverse and incompetent judges approve or disapprove them. Though also, because the blessed God delights in propagating blessedness and imparting it to his intelligent creatures, he is pleased in recommending himself so far to their estimation and love as is necessary to their own felicity; wherein also he doth as it were but enjoy his own goodness,—as his felicity can only be in himself,—and is pleased with the self-satisfying beauty, pleasantness, and glory of it.

Yet further also we are to consider, that though it be most suitable to the majesty and the independent self-sufficient fulness of God, to take pleasure only in the real goodness, excellency, decency, and glory, of whatever he is and doth; yet it belongs to, and becomes, the dutiful affection of his people towards him, to be deeply concerned how he is thought and spoken of in the world. Dishonourable reflections upon him are therefore as a sword in their bones. What cannot hurt him ought to wound them: which dutiful love also cannot but make them highly covet that his name might be known and renowned all the world over;

knowing that the reproach, that is no real damage, is a wrong to him, and that universal praise is his right, though it cannot be an advantage. And this love to his name they cannot more fitly express than in praying to him. And here we are further to note that this argument, thus generally considered, hath, when we use it in prayer, a twofold aspect; that is, we are to consider it as an argument both to God and to ourselves: to God, as whereby we expect to prevail with him to hear our prayers; to ourselves, as whereby we are to be urged and excited to pray with the more importunity and confidence, so as not to faint in prayer. Thus much as to what is more general.

We are now,—

II. To consider it in reference to this present case; where we are to show, how the name of God may be understood to be concerned in his abhorring, so as to forsake, a people more peculiarly related to him; and the fit and right use of this argument in deprecating his doing so.

1. How the name of God may be understood to be concerned in this matter. Taking his name to signify not only his nature, and the attributes of his Being themselves, but also the glory and lustre of those his attributes especially which are to have a more principal exercise and demonstration in the course of his government over mankind, and more particularly, over such a select, peculiar people; it may seem greatly to reflect upon those his governing attributes and detract from the glory of them, and consequently to lessen the honour and dignity of his government, if, having taken such a people into near and peculiar relation to him, he should grow into that dislike of them as at length quite to reject and cast them off, as if he now disdained the relation. That such a contemptuous rejection of this people is the thing here deprecated by the prophet, is evident (besides what hath been noted of the true import of the word rendered 'abhor') from other expressions in the context, that plainly speak this very sense and show this to be the matter about which he was so deeply concerned. "Hast

thou utterly rejected Judah? hath thy soul loathed Zion?"[1] and then presently is added, to the same sense, "Do not abhor us," etc.: as when a man's heart is full of a thing, and the sense of it abounds, he varies expressions; and from the abundance of the heart, as from a fountain, the matter streams from him several ways. His iterations and varied forms of speech to the same purpose, show what urged him, and about what his mind was engaged and taken up. It is plain that, at this time, that which this holy man was in this agony for, was not a lighter, temporary anger, but so settled a displeasure, as upon which a final rejection was likely to ensue.

And he apprehends the 'name' of God to be concerned in it; which it appears also lies with great weight upon his spirit: "Our iniquities testify against us, but do thou it" (that is, "save us," as afterwards) "for thy name's sake;"[2] and again, "Thou, O Lord, art in the midst of us, and we are called by thy *name;* leave us not:"[3] which also shows how he understood it to be concerned; namely, as the great God was not only the common ruler of the world, but a governor over *them* in a way and upon terms that were very peculiar; namely, by covenant and compact,—such whereof the nuptial contract is the usual resemblance; by which the related persons mutually pass into each other's right, and whereupon the inferior person in the relation takes the name of the superior.[4] "We will eat our own bread, and wear our own apparel; only let us be called by thy name." So the great God entering that covenant with a people,—"I will be your God, and ye shall be my people,"—speaks of himself as conjugally related to them: "Thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name. Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God. Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate: but thou shalt be called Hephzi-bah, and thy land Beulah: for the Lord delighteth in thee, and thy

[1] Jer. xiv. 19. [2] Ver. 7. [3] Ver. 9. [4] As Isa. iv. 1.

land shall be married."[1] "Thy Maker is thine husband:"[2] who being the governing relative, the phrase of being called by his name imports the agreed, voluntary subjection of such a people to his government, and his vouchsafing to be their governor upon the special terms of his own covenant. Whereupon another prophet, pleading for his special favour and protection unto this people against their heathen adversaries, uses this phrase: "We are thine: thou never barest rule over them; they were not called by thy *name*."[3]

Therefore this prophet understood his *name* to be concerned if he should reject them, as it signified his honour and reputation as their governor by covenant: which further appears by the immediate connexion of these words, "Do not abhor us, for thy name's sake;" with those that next follow, "Do not disgrace the throne of thy glory: remember, break not thy covenant with us;"—as much as to say, 'Thou hast covenanted to be our governor, and hast erected, accordingly, thy glorious throne among us. How canst thou sustain or endure to break thy covenant and dishonour thy own throne; to draw a disreputation upon thy government, or cast a dark shadow upon those famed excellencies which were wont to recommend thee in the sight of all nations as the best ruler that ever people had, and might make the sons of men apprehend it the most desirable thing in all the world to be, on the same terms, under thy government?' Particularly, of his attributes that have more special relation to his government, such as these may seem (and have been apprehended) liable to be reflected on in this case:—

i. His *power;* as if he had designed to do some great thing for them, which he could not bring about, and therefore he casts them off, and will seem no further concerned for them; or as if his power were confined within such limits that it would suffice him to destroy them once for all, but not constantly to preserve and prosper them. So when God threatened to smite his people Israel with the pestilence, and disinherit them,[4] Moses urges on their behalf, "Then the

[1] Isa. lxii. 2—4. [2] Isa. liv. 5. [3] Isa. lxiii. 19. [4] Num. xiv. 12.

Egyptians shall hear it, (for thou broughtest up this people in thy might from among them,) and they will tell it to the inhabitants of this land: for they have heard that thou, Lord, art among this people; that thou, Lord, art seen face to face; and that thy cloud standeth over them, and that thou goest before them, by day time in a pillar of cloud, and in a pillar of fire by night. Now if thou shalt kill all this people as one man, then the nations which have heard the fame of thee will speak, saying, Because the Lord was not able to bring this people into the land which he sware unto them, therefore he hath slain them in the wilderness;"[1]—as much as to say, 'That thou hast peculiarly owned them, and concerned thyself for them, cannot be hid. It hath made a great noise in the world and been the common talk of all nations, and made a more special impression of awe and terror upon the Egyptians against whom thou first tookest part with them, that thou wast usually seen face to face amongst them; that most extraordinary tokens of a Divine presence, the miraculous pillar of a cloud by day and of fire by night, were constantly afforded them. There is no coming off, (so far and so openly hast thou been concerned for them,) but this construction will be made of it,—that though very great difficulties have been overcome for them, there was a prospect of yet greater, that could not be overcome; and therefore, that whereas less power was required to make a present end of them, thou didst rather choose to do that.' And this consideration seems sometimes to have weighed much with God himself, as we find he is brought in speaking: "I said, I would scatter them into corners, I would make the remembrance of them to cease from among men; were it not that I feared the wrath of the enemy, lest their adversaries should behave themselves strangely, and lest they should say, Our hand is high,"[2] etc. Whence also,—

ii. His *wisdom* must, by consequence, be exposed too; that this was not foreseen and considered when he first undertook their conduct and espoused their interest.

[1] Num. xiv. 13—16. [2] Deut. xxxii. 26, 27.

iii. His *goodness* and benignity, his propensity to do good and bestow favours; that it was not so unexhausted a fountain as might seem suitable to a God, and to him, whom his wonderful noted acts of favour towards that people had made to be vogued among the nations as the *only* one.

iv. His *clemency*, and unaptness to be provoked; the great commendation of rulers, who ought to be 'legum similes'—as little moved with passions as the laws they govern by; a thing especially to be expected in a divine Ruler, and most agreeable to the serenity of the nature of God, according not only to what men are commonly wont to apprehend of his nature, but what he had been pleased to declare of himself, as is alleged:[1] "Let the power of my Lord be great"—intimating that to appear hurried with passions would seem an un-Godlike impotency; and it is added—"according as thou hast spoken, saying, The Lord is long-suffering, and of great mercy," etc. Whereupon, therefore,—

v. His *sincerity*, another great excellency in a governor, seems liable to be suspected too; that he should not be what he seemed, had given out of himself, or was taken at least to be,—the import and signification of his former dispensations: which is the scope of Moses' reasoning.[2] "Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, and say, For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth?" As if he had said, 'Why shall the Egyptian enemy have occasion to apprehend that God did only hide mischievous intentions towards this people, under an appearance and show of kindness to them; that he only drew them hereby to trust in him and commit themselves to his care and protection, that he might, when he saw his time, the more please, and as it were, sport himself in having deceived them, and in disappointing and destroying them? that therefore the God of Israel was not such a one as he seemed willing to be thought, nor a relation to him so covetable a thing?' Or else,—

[1] Num. xiv. 17, 18. [2] Exod. xxxii. 12.

vi. His *constancy*, and faithfulness to himself. He may be thought, in this case, more mutable and unsteady in his own designs than is worthy of a God. Even Balaam's notion of the Deity could not allow him to think, either first, that "as a man he could lie;" or next, that "as the son of man he could repent."[1] The former he thought not agreeable to the sincerity, nor the latter to the constancy, which he reckoned must belong to the nature of God. That he should appropriate a people to himself, remarkably own them by a long-continued series of eminent favours, and at length seem to grow weary of them and his own design, and throw them off,—how un-Godlike a levity doth this seem to import! And how contrary to the encouragement which we sometimes find given to such a people, even from the regard he would have to his own name in this respect: "The Lord will not forsake his people for his great name's sake: because it hath pleased the Lord to make you his people."[2]

vii. His *righteousness*,—in reference to his promise and covenant with such a people, or his faithfulness unto them. For as, considering only his purpose and his having begun a design, his pursuing of it is but faithfulness (or a being true) to himself and his own design; so when his purpose hath expressed itself in a promise to a people, to make it good is to be faithful and true to *them*, and is therefore a part of righteousness, his promise having created a right in them to whom he made it. By his purpose he is only a debtor to himself; by his promise, he is a debtor to them too. Upon this account his name seems liable to be reflected on, if he should reject such a people; as the words following the text intimate: "Do not abhor us, for thy name's sake; do not disgrace the throne of thy glory: break not thy covenant with us." And such is the import of Moses' plea;[3] "Because the Lord was not able to bring this people into the land which he sware unto them, therefore he hath slain them in the wilderness;" which pleading of his, he himself also recites,[4] with little variation; and implies in it, that if God

[1] Num. xxiii. 19. [2] 1 Sam. xii. 22. [3] Num. xiv. 16. [4] Deut. ix. 28.

should reject this people, it would turn greatly to the prejudice of his name and repute in the world in respect of his truth and fidelity, which made so great a part of his name and glory; that in his anger he neither regarded his word nor his oath,—no bond was sacred with him: than which, what could make a prince more inglorious and infamous? And how gladly would those more implacable enemies, out of whose hands he had rescued his people, catch at such an occasion of traducing and defaming him!

We see then how the name of God may appear concerned in this matter. It seems indeed, in all these respects very deeply concerned and much exposed to obloquy, if he reject such a people. Though if he should, it can never be but upon such terms as that all that can be objected will appear to be but groundless cavil and calumny, and admit of easy answer, as we shall see anon. In the meantime, while the matter admits of any hope, we are,—

2. To show the fitness and right use of this argument for the preventing of it. We are, indeed, manifestly to distinguish these two things: The general fitness of this argument to be used, and wherein stands the fit and due use of it; as anything else, though in itself very fit to be used for such and such purposes,—as meat and drink for instance, or learning or speech,—may yet notwithstanding be used very unfitly. Therefore we shall speak to both these severally; and show how fit an argument this is to be insisted on in prayer, even to the purpose we are now speaking of, and what is requisite to the due and right use of it to this purpose.

(1.) That it is in itself an argument very fit to be insisted on in prayer, to this purpose or to any other in reference whereto it is fit for us to pray, is most evident; for it is most likely to prevail with God, being an argument taken from himself; and most fit to move and affect us, for it hath most weight in it. And we ought in prayer, as much as is possible, to conform our minds to God's; so as not only to pray for the things which we apprehend him most likely to grant, but

upon the same grounds and with the same design, which he must be supposed to have in granting them, and that there be but one end and aim common to him and us. We are told that if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us.[1] This is to ask according to his will, in the highest and most certain sense. For the first and most fixed object of any will whatsoever is the end; of any right will, the best and most excellent end,—which can be but one. The Divine will, we are sure, is ever right; and must, so far as it is known, be directive and a rule to ours. Concerning the end, it is most certainly known he doth all things, as he made all things, for himself. Concerning the means and way to his end, we are often ignorant and in doubt; and when we are, we then are to will nothing but upon condition that it will conduce to the great and common end of all things; and do interpretatively retract and unpray every petition, in the very making it, which shall be really repugnant thereto. Nothing can move God besides. He is eternally self-moved. Our attempt will be both undutiful and vain, if we suffer our spirits to be engaged and moved by anything which will not be a motive unto him. Therefore no argument can be fit besides this, for his own name, or that cannot be reduced to it.

But the fitness of this argument may be more distinctly shown and discerned from the following considerations, namely, that it is most suitable,—

i. To the object of prayer,—the glorious, ever-blessed God; to whom it belongs, as the appropriate, most incommunicable prerogative of the Godhead, to be the last as well as the first, the Alpha and Omega, the end as he is the author of all things: "Of whom, and through whom, and to whom, are all things"; and unto whom must be all glory for ever.[2] So that to pray to him that he would do this or that, finally and ultimately for anything else than his own name, is humbly to supplicate him that he would resign the Godhead, and quit his throne to this or that creature.

[1] 1 John v. 14. [2] Rom. xi. 36.

ii. To the right subject of prayer, considered whether according to its original or renewed state,—according to primitive nature or renewing grace: to primitive nature, which was no doubt pointed upon God as the last end; otherwise a creature had been made with aversion to him and in the highest pitch of enmity and rebellion, since there can be no higher controversy than about the last end: and to renewing grace; the design whereof, as it is such, can be no other than to restore us to our original state,—to bring us back, and state us where and as we were, in that absolute subordination to God that was original and natural to us: which therefore stands in repentance towards God as our end, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ as our way, wherein alone we can acceptably return and render ourselves back unto him. "We through the law are dead to the law,"—being humbled, broken, macerated, mortified by it, we are become dead to it, exempt from its execrating, condemning power and dominion,—"that we might live to God,"[1] that a new, divine life and nature might spring up in us, aiming at God, tending and working entirely and only towards him: *we* have been reduced to a chaos, to utter confusion, or even brought to nothing, that we might be created anew, with a re-implanted disposition to serve the ends and purposes for which we were first made; and therefore are "to yield ourselves unto God as those that are alive from the dead,"[2]—that is, "alive to God through Jesus Christ."[3] In him we are "created to good works," (that are principally to be estimated from the end), "which God had before ordained that we should walk in them."[4] Thus we are reconciled to God. The controversy is taken up, which was about no lower thing than the Deity,—who should be God, he or we; whether we should live and be for ourselves, or him. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new; and all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ."[5] Here-

[1] Gal. ii. 19. [2] Rom. vi. 13. [3] As verse 11.
[4] Eph. ii. 10. [5] 2 Cor. v. 17, 18.

upon this is, in prayer, the only proper, genuine, connatural breath of the new creature, the most inward, habitual sense of a devoted soul: 'To thee, O Lord, be all things; mayst thou ever be the All in all. Let the creation and all things be nothing, otherwise than in thee, and for thee!'

iii. To the Mediator, in whose name we pray: who never undertook that part of mediating between God and us with a design to alienate and give away from God the natural rights of the Godhead, but to assert them to the highest; to repair unto God, and expiate by his blood, the encroachments we had made upon them, and provide we might do so no more; that we might be forgiven what was past, and be dutiful and subject for the future. His principal design was to salve the injured honour and dignity of the Divine government, and to reconcile therewith our impunity and felicity; to make them consist. He was therefore to redeem us to God by his blood.[1] How immodest and absurd a confidence were it, for any to make use of the Mediator's name in prayer against his principal and most important design!

iv. To the Spirit of prayer, who, we are told,[2] makes intercession for the saints κατὰ Θεόν. We read, "according to the will of God," but no more is in the text than "according to God;" that is, in subserviency to him and his interest; so as that in prayer, by the dictate of that Spirit, they supremely mind the things of God, and are most intent upon his concernments, and upon their own only in subordination to his: as it may well be supposed his own Spirit will be true to him, and not act the hearts which it governs otherwise; and that the prayers that are from himself and of his own inspiring, will be most entirely loyal, and import nothing but duty and devotedness to him.

v. To the most perfect model and platform of prayer given us by our Lord himself; in which the first place is given to the petition, "Hallowed be thy name," and the two next are about God's concernments, before any are mentioned of our own: so that the things we are to desire are digested

[1] Rev. v. 9. [2] Rom. viii. 27.

into two tables,—as the decalogue is, containing the things we are to do,—and those that respect God, as was fit, set first.

vi. To the constant tenour of the prayers of holy men in Scripture. We have seen how earnestly Moses presses this argument in the mentioned places.[1] And so doth Samuel express his confidence in it, when he promises, upon their desire, to pray for the trembling people of Israel:[2] "The Lord will not forsake his people *for his great name's sake;* because it hath pleased the Lord to make you his people. Moreover, as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you." And this was a pair whom God hath himself dignified as persons of great excellency in prayer, and whose prayers he would have a value for, if for any man's: "Though Moses and Samuel stood before me,"[3] etc. · Thus also doth Joshua insist, upon occasion of that rebuke Israel met with before Ai,[4] "O Lord, what shall I say, when Israel turneth their backs before their enemies? For the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land shall hear of it, and shall environ us round, and cut off our name from the earth: and what wilt thou do unto thy great *name?*" And so doth Daniel plead, (one of a famous triad too of potent wrestlers in prayer,)[5] "O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken, and do; defer not, for thine own sake, O my God: for thy city and thy people *are called by thy name.*"[6]

vii. To the highest example and pattern of prayer, (fit to be mentioned apart,) our Lord himself, who, in some of his last agonies, praying, "Father, save me from this hour," represses that innocent voice; "but for this cause came I unto this hour;" and adds, "Father, glorify thy name;"[7] intimating that the sum of his desires did resolve into that one thing, and contented to suffer what was most grievous to himself, that so that might be done which should be finally most honourable to that great name.

[1] Exod. xxxii. and Num. xiv. [2] 1 Sam. xii. 22, 23. [3] Jer. xv. 1.
[4] Josh. vii. 8, 9. [5] Ezek. xiv. 14. [6] Dan. ix. 19.
[7] John xii. 27, 28.

viii. To the design and end of prayer; which is partly and principally to be considered as an act of worship, a homage to the great God, and so the design of it is to honour him; and partly as a means or way of obtaining for ourselves the good things we pray for, which therefore is another, but an inferior end of prayer. Whether we consider it under the one notion or the other, or propound to ourselves the one or the other end in praying, it is most agreeable to pray after this tenour, and to insist most upon this argument in prayer. For, first,—

Do we intend prayer as a homage to the great God, and to give him his due glory in praying to him? How fitly doth it fall in with our design, when not only our praying itself, but the matter we chiefly pray for, have the same scope and end! We pray that we may glorify God; and the thing we more principally desire of him in prayer is, that he would glorify himself, or that his name be glorified; and square all other desires by this measure, desiring nothing else but what may be, or as it is, subservient hereto. And, secondly,—

If we intend and design anything of advantage to ourselves, we can only expect to be heard and to obtain it upon this ground. The great God deals plainly with us in this, and hath expressly declared that if he hear and graciously answer us, it will only be upon this consideration, as is often inculcated:[1] "Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord God, I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy *name's* sake . . . . And I will sanctify my great *name*, which was profaned among the heathen." And again, "Not for your sakes do I this, saith the Lord God, be it known unto you: be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel."[2] This every way then appears a most fit argument to be insisted on in prayer, and to this purpose as well as to any other; many of the instances mentioned from Scripture having an express and particular reference to this very case, of praying

[1] Ezek. xxxvi. 22, 23. [2] Ver. 32.

for a people related to God, and upon whom his name was called. It remains then, to show,—

(2.) What is requisite to the right and due use of this argument unto this purpose: where we may sum up all in two words,—*sincerity* and *submission*. The former whereof belongs to this case in common with all others wherein we can use this argument, or, which is all one, wherein we can pray at all. The other hath somewhat a more peculiar reference to this case considered apart by itself. And, indeed that the one and the other of these are requisite in the use of this argument, are both of them corollaries from the truth itself we have been hitherto insisting on, and that have the very substance and spirit of it in them. For if this be an argument fit to be used in prayer at all, it is obvious to collect that it ought to be used with great sincerity in any case, and with much submission, especially in such a case as this.

i. It is requisite we use this argument with sincerity;—that is, that we have a sense in our hearts correspondent to the use of it, or that the impression be deeply inwrought into our spirits of the glorious excellency of the name of God; so as it be really the most desirable thing in our eyes that it be magnified and rendered most glorious, whatsoever becomes of us, or of any people or nation under heaven. Many have learned to use the words, "For thy name's sake," as a *formula*, 'a plausible phrase,' a customary, fashionable form of speech; when, first, there is no inward sense in their hearts that doth *subesse*, 'lies under,' the expression, so as that with them it can be said to signify anything, or have any meaning at all: or secondly, they may have much another meaning from what these words do import, a very low, self-regarding one: as when, in praying for a people that bear this name, of whom themselves are a part, these words are in their mouths, but their hearts are really solicitous for nothing but their own little concernments, their wealth, and peace, and ease, and fleshly accommodations; apprehending a change of religion cannot fall out among such a people, but in a conjunc-

tion with what may be dangerous to themselves in these mean respects: whereupon it may fall out that they will pray earnestly, cry aloud, be full of concern, vehemently importunate, and all the noise and cry mean nothing but their own corn, wine, and oil! They mention the "name of the Lord, but not in truth." It appears the servants of God in the use of this argument, have been touched in their very souls with so deep and quick a sense of the dignity and honour of the Divine name, that nothing else hath seemed considerable with them, or worth the regarding besides: as in those pathetic expostulations, "What wilt thou do to thy great name?" "What will the Egyptians say?" etc. This alone, apart from their own concernments, was the weighty argument with them. For it weighed nothing with Moses, on the contrary, to be told, "I will make of thee a great nation." To have, himself, never so glorious a name, to be spread in the world and transmitted to all after ages as the root and father of a mighty people, was a light thing in comparison of the injury and disreputation that would be done to God's own name, if he should desert or destroy this people. Or, thirdly, they may have a very wicked meaning. The name of God may be invoked, religious solemnities used, as a pretence and colour to flagitious actions;—'In nomine Domini,' etc. Most execrable villanies have been prefaced with that sacred, adorable name: as when a fast was proclaimed, but a rapine upon Naboth's vineyard was the thing designed; and the awful name of God was indifferently used in prayer and in perjury, to serve the same vile purpose. In which soever of those degrees this venerable name is *insincerely* mentioned, we ought to account a great requisite is wanting to a right use of it as an argument in prayer; and should consider both the absurdity and the iniquity of our so misusing it. First,

The absurdity; for who can reasonably think Him capable of hearing our prayers, whom at the same time he thinks incapable of knowing our hearts? Am I consistent with myself when I invocate, worship, trust in Him as a God, whom I think I can impose upon by a false show? Is it

likely, if I can deceive Him, that He can help and succour me? Secondly,

The iniquity: for this can be no low, though it be not the peculiar, sense of taking the name of the Lord our God in vain; and we know with what awful words that great precept is enforced: "The Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain." Nor can any man devise to put a greater affront upon him than to approach him with insincerity: for it is to use him as a senseless idol, and signifies as if I counted him as the vanities of the Gentiles,—one of their inanimate or brutal gods; denies his omniscience to discern, and his justice and power to revenge the indignity, all at once. And what now is to be expected from such a prayer, wherein I both fight with myself and him at the same time? with myself, for the same object that I worship, I affront in the same act; and with him, for my worship is but seeming and the affront real.

Such a disagreement with myself were enough to blast my prayer. The *ἀνὴρ δίψυχος*, 'the man with two souls,'[1] "the double-minded man," is said to be *ἀκατάστατος*, "unstable," ('inconsistent with himself,' the word signifies;) "and let not such a man think," saith the apostle, "that he shall receive anything of the Lord;"—much more when his prayer is not only not acceptable to God, but offensive; and by which he is so far from pleasing, that he provokes.

It is then of unspeakable concernment to us, in the use of this argument, that we well understand ourselves. Let us search our hearts, and see that we mean as we speak,—that we do not pretend a concernedness and zeal for the name of God, when He that knows all things knows that we lie, and that we do but flatter him with our mouth and lie unto him with our tongues, when our heart is not right with him;—[2] that we do not seem to be in great perplexity about the name and glory of God, when we are quite unconcerned what becomes of his name; are only solicitous lest we should suffer ourselves, afraid of being undone, of losing our estates, or of

[1] James i. 8. [2] Ps. lxxviii. 36, 37.

being driven from our dwellings, or perhaps but of being abridged somewhat of our conveniencies and more delectable enjoyments: as if, not the fortunes of Cæsar and the empire, but the mighty and all-comprehensive name of the great Lord of heaven and earth did depend upon our being rich or quiet, and at our ease, and having our sense and fancy gratified: as if the heavens rested upon our shoulders, and the frame of the universe were sustained by us, who ourselves need such pitiful supports, lean upon shadows, and if they fail us are ready to sink and drop into nothing!

ii. Submission is highly requisite, especially in a case of this nature; that is, we are to submit to his judgment the disposal both of his concernments, which this argument directly intends, and our own, which we are too apt indirectly to connect with his, so as to be more principally solicitous about them. First,

His concernment in this case must, as is fit, be submitted with all humble deference to his own judgment;—it being really a doubtful case, not whether it be a desirable thing that the name and honour of God should be preserved and advanced, or whether we should desire it; but whether his continuing such a people in visible relation to himself, or rejecting and casting them off, will be more honourable and glorious to him. Where the doubt lies, there must be the submission; that is, this matter must be referred to himself, it being such as whereof he only is the competent judge, and not we. The thing to be judged of, is not whether occasion may not be taken by men of short discourse and of profane minds to think and speak reflectingly of such a piece of providence; namely, if a people whom God had long visibly owned and favoured should be at length rejected with detestation and exposed to ruin. It is like the heathen nations were very apt so to insult, when God did finally abandon and give up that people of the Jews, and make them cease at once to be his people and any people at all: as we know they did before, when they gained any temporary advantage upon them,—upon their being able to spoil their country, to reduce

them to some distress, and straiten their chief city with a siege. As if they had them totally in their power, they presently draw the God of Israel into an ignominious comparison with the fictitious deities of other vanquished countries, the gods of Hamath, Arphad, Sepharvaim,[1] (who are also styled their kings, as is thought,[2] though the destruction of their kings may also admit to be meant as an argument of the impotency of their gods; and they are mentioned distinctly, as perhaps was not observed, in both those cited books of Scripture where that history is more largely recorded,[3]) as if he were able to do no more for the protection of his people than they for their worshippers: and so, for a few moments, he remains under the censure of being an impotent God. But that momentary cloud he knew how soon to dispel, and make his glory shine out so much the more brightly unto not only a convincing, but an amazing confutation of so profane folly; yielded the short-sighted adversary a temporary victory, which he could presently redeem out of their hands, that he might the more gloriously triumph in their surprising, unfeared ruin: and so let them and all the world see that those advantages were not extorted, but permitted upon considerations that lay out of their reach to comprehend; and that they proceeded not from want of power, but the excellency of other perfections,—which would in due time be understood by such as were capable of making a right judgment,—his wisdom, holiness, and justice; which appeared in putting a people so related to him, under seasonable rebukes and discountenance, when the state of the case and the methods of his government required it; and so much the rather because they were so related, according to that: "You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities."[4] The matter here to be disputed, was not whether it did not occasion a present dishonour to the God of Israel, to let the enemy have such a

[1] Isa. xxxvi. 19. [2] Selden, *De Diis Syris*, ii. c. 16; 2 Kings xix. 13.
[3] 2 Kings xviii. 34; xix. 13; and Isa. xxxvi. 19; xxxvii. 12, 13.
[4] Amos iii. 2.

seeming ground of spiteful suggestions concerning him, as if he were impotent, or variable, or false to them that had entrusted themselves to his protection and care; but whether that dishonour were not recompensed with advantage by the greater glory that accrued to him afterwards. And this also is the matter that must come under judgment, if at length he should finally cast off such a people; whether upon the whole, all things being considered and taken together, it be not more for the honour of his name and the reputation of his rectoral attributes, to break off such a relation to them, than continue it. Wherein he is not concerned to approve himself to the opinion of fools or half-witted persons, and whose shallow judgment, too, is governed by their disaffection; but to such as can consider,—perhaps, to such as shall hereafter rise up in succeeding ages. For he is not in haste. His steady duration, commensurate with all the successions of time, and which runs into eternity, can well admit of his staying till this or that frame and contexture of providence be completed, and capable of being more entirely viewed at once; and till calmer minds, and men of less interested passions, shall come to have the considering of it. And in the meantime he hath those numberless myriads of wise and holy sages in the other world, the continual observers of all his dispensations, that behold them with equal, unbiassed minds; and, from the evidence of the matter, give their concurrent approbation and applause with all the true members of the church on earth: "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints."[1] But it is enough, and much more considerable to approve himself to himself, and that all his dispensations are guided according to the steady, eternal reason of things; which is an inviolable law to him, from which he never departs; and from the perpetual, uniform agreement of all his providences whereto, an indubious glory will result unto him, that will never admit the least eclipse, or ever be capable of being drawn into dispute: and accord-

[1] Rev. xv. 3.

ing whereto it will appear, if ever he forsake such a people, the concernment of his name and glory in the matter was the great inducement to it; that he did even owe it to himself, and had not otherwise done right to his own name. And whatsoever might be argued from it to the contrary will be found capable of a clear and easy answer, so as that the weight of the argument will entirely lie on this side. For,—

As to his power, he hath reason to be ever secure concerning the reputation of that, having given, and knowing how further to give, when he pleases, sufficient demonstrations of it other ways. Nor was it ever his design to represent himself as a Being of mere power, which of itself hath nothing of moral excellency in it; nor do the appearances of it tend to beget that true notion of God in the minds of men which he designed to propagate, otherwise than as the glory of it should shine in conjunction with that of his other attributes that are more peculiarly worthy of God, more appropriate to him, and more apt to represent him to the world as the most suitable object of a religious veneration. Whereas mere power is capable of having place in an unintelligent nature, and in an intelligent, tainted with the most odious impurities; he never desired to be known among men by such a name as should signify power only, unaccompanied with wisdom, holiness, etc. And,—

For his wisdom; it is seen in pursuing valuable ends by methods suitable to them, and becoming himself. It became the absolute sovereignty of a God, to select a nation that he would favour more than other nations; but it would ill have agreed with his wisdom to have bound himself absolutely to them, so to favour them, howsoever they should demean themselves.

His bounty and goodness, though it found them no better than other people, was to have made them better. Nor was it any disreputation to his goodness to divert its current, when they, after long trial, do finally resist its design.

His clemency must not be made liable to be mistaken for inadvertency or neglect, and to give the world cause to say,

'Tush, God seeth not, neither is there knowledge in the Most High:' nor for indifferency and unconcernedness what men do, as if good and bad were alike to him, and that such as do evil were good in the sight of the Lord, and he delighted in them; words wherewith he some time complained that men wearied him.[1] He is not to redeem the reputation of one attribute by the real prejudice of another; that is, the offence and grievance to it, which acting directly against it, if that were possible, would occasion.

His sincerity will be highly vindicated and glorified, when it shall be seen that there is nothing more of severity in such a dispensation, whenever it takes place, than was plainly expressed in his often-repeated forewarnings and threatenings, even long before. And, therefore,—

He is herein but *constant to himself*, and should be more liable to the charge of mutability and inconstancy, if, finally, when the case should so require, he should not take this course. And,—

As to his *righteousness and fidelity* towards such a people, even those to whom he more strictly obliged himself than ever he did to any particular nation besides; let but the tenour of his covenant with them be consulted, and see whether he did not reserve to himself a liberty of casting them off, if they revolted from him: and whether these were not his express terms, that he would be with them while they were with him, but that if they forsook him, he would forsake them also.

Therefore much more is he at liberty as to any other people, to whom he never made so peculiar promises of external favours as he did to this people. Nor hereupon can anything be pleaded from his name or that is within the compass of its signification, with any certainty that it shall conclude and be determining on the behalf of such a people. There is a real, great doubt in the case, whether the argument may not weigh more the other way; and whether the wickedness of such a people may not be grown to such a prodigious excess, that whereas none of these his mentioned

[1] Mal. ii. 17.

attributes do make it necessary he should continue his relation, some other, that could not be alleged for it, may not be alleged against it, and do not make it necessary he should break it off. The glory of his holiness (which if we consider it in itself, and consider the value and stress he is wont to put upon it, we might even reckon the prime glory of the Deity) is not, perhaps, to be sufficiently salved and vindicated without at length quite abandoning and casting them off. There seems to be somewhat very awful and monitory in those most pleasant, gracious words, and that breathe so sweet a savour, "But now they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God;"[1] namely, that if a people that have long enjoyed brighter discoveries of heaven, and the way to it, do yet generally bear a disaffected heart to the design of that revelation, remain habitually terrene like the rest of the world, governed by the spirit of it, engulfed in the common pollutions, sensualities, impieties, of the wicked, atheistical inhabitants of this earth, God will be even ashamed to be called their God. He will reckon it ignominious, and a reproach to him, (though he will save such as are sincere among them,) to stand visibly related to such a people, as their God. What! to have *them* for a peculiar people that are not peculiar! to distinguish them that will not be distinguished! to make a visible difference by external favours and privileges, where there is no visible difference in practice and conversation, that might signify a more excellent spirit! This is not only to lose the intended design, but to have it turn to a disadvantage; and whom He expected to be for a name and a praise to him, a crown and a royal diadem, to become to him a dishonour and a blot. And we do find that such severities as have been used towards such a people, are declared to have been so even for the sake of His name: "But ye turned, and polluted my name; . . . therefore I will make you to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth."[2] And when therefore, a remnant of this people

[1] Heb. xi. 16. [2] Jer. xxxiv. 16, 17.

rebelliously, against God's express word, went down into Egypt, preferring a precarious subsistence, under tyranny and idolatry, at the cruel mercy of a long-since baffled enemy, before the true religion, and liberty under the Divine protection; see how God expresses his resentment of this dishonour done to his name and the affront offered to his government. "Therefore hear ye the word of the Lord, all Judah that dwell in the land of Egypt; Behold, I have sworn by my great name, saith the Lord, that my name shall no more be named in the mouth of any man of Judah in all the land of Egypt, saying, 'The Lord God liveth.'"[1]

And when the time drew nearer of God's total rejection of that people, as in the time of Malachi's prophecies, they are charged with despising and profaning his name;[2] and are told God had now no pleasure in them, nor would accept an offering at their hands, but that his name should be great among the Gentiles, even from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same;[3] intimating that,—excepting those few that thought on his name,[4] and that feared his name,[5] who, he says, should be his when he made up his jewels, and the Sun of righteousness should rise upon them,—he would have no more to do with them; but in the day that should burn as an oven, when the whole hemisphere should be as one fiery vault, they should be burnt up as stubble, and neither root nor branch be left of them: and all this upon the concern he had for his name, which was reproached by such a people's pretending to it. Whereupon they had been threatened,[6] that except they did give glory to his name, he would curse them and their blessings, corrupt their seed, spread dung upon their faces, even that of their solemn feasts, and they should be taken away therewith.

It is therefore possible the whole force of this argument may lie against us in praying for such a people: I say it is possible it may; whether actually it do or no, we can never be competent judges. Our knowledge is not large enough, nor

[1] Jer. xliv. 26. [2] Chap. i. 6, 12. [3] Ver. 10, 11. [4] Chap. iii. 5. [5] Chap. iv. 2. [6] Chap. ii. 2, 3.

our minds enough comprehensive. Our wisdom is folly itself to the estimating such a case. We are capable of pronouncing hastily, 'it would in this or that particular respect be dishonourable and an obscurement of God's name, if he should cast off England;' but he that pronounces hastily considers but a few things and looks but a little way.

The question is whether, all things compared and considered together that belong to such a case, it will be more honourable to God or dishonourable, and more or less recommend him to intelligent minds, get him a greater and more excellent name and renown in the world, when it shall be enlightened to consider the case, to break off his relation or continue it? We know his own judgment is according to truth, and hope he will judge the way that will be more favourable to us; but we cannot be certain of it. It is a case that requires the judgment of his all-comprehending mind, whose prospect is large every way, and takes in all the decencies and indecencies that escape our notice; as we know, in viewing things with the eye, a quick and clear sight, especially helped with a fit instrument, will discern many things so fine and minute as to be to a duller eye altogether invisible. It is the work of wisdom and judgment to discern exactly the critical seasons and junctures of time when to do this or that. And the wise God in his dispensations, especially towards a great community, or the collective body of a people, takes usually a vast compass of time within which to select the apt and fit season for this or that act, whether of severity or mercy towards them. And it is more fit, as by the coincidence of things it contributes more to the greater glory of his name. We cannot discern the things the concurrence whereof makes this a fitter season than another, that such an event should be placed just there, within so large a tract of time. What mortal man, or indeed what finite mind, was capable of judging some hundreds of years before, what was just wanting to the fulness of the Amorites' sin; so as that it should be more honourable and glorious to the Divine justice, not to animadvert thereon till that very time when He did

it? or why he chose that time which he pitched upon, wherein to come down and deliver his Israel from their Egyptian oppressors? or when, (without inspiration,) to be able to say, "The time to favour Zion, even the set time, is come?" Nor are we to resolve the matter only into the absoluteness of his sovereignty, upon the account whereof he may take what time he pleases, but the depth of his hidden wisdom; for he "doth all things according to the counsel of his will," having reasons to himself, which our shallow, dim sight perceives not, and whereof we are infinitely less able to make a sure judgment, than a country idiot of reasons of state. He may, as to the present case, think it most fit, most honourable and glorious, so often to forgive, or so long to forbear such a delinquent people; and may at length judge it most becoming him and most worthy of him, as he is the common Ruler of the world, and their injured, despised Ruler, to strike the fatal stroke and quite cut them off from him.

Now here it is, therefore, necessarily our duty to use this argument with him of "his name," so as wholly to submit the matter to his judgment; and but conditionally, if it will indeed make most for the glory of his name, that then he will not abhor and reject such a people, even for his name's sake. Nor *can* we herein be too importunate, if we be not peremptory; not too intent upon the end, the glory of his name,—for about the goodness, excellency, and desirableness of that, we are certain,—if we be not too determinate about the means, or what will be most honourable to his name, concerning which we are uncertain.

Neither is it disallowed us to use the best judgment we can about the means, and the interest of God's name in this case. It is not our fault to be mistaken,—he expects us not to use the judgment of gods. But it will be our fault to be peremptory and confident in a matter wherein we may be mistaken; and must signify too much officiousness, (as if we understood his affairs better than himself,) and a bold insolence, to take upon us to be the absolute judges of what

we understand not, and to cover our presumption with a pretence of duty. Therefore, though such a people be dear to us, yet because his name ought to be infinitely more dear, *that* in the settled bent of our hearts we ought to prefer, and be patient of his sentence, whatever it prove to be; with deep resentment of our own desert, but with high complacency that his name is vindicated and glorified; and with a sincere, undissembled applause of the justice of his proceedings, how severe soever they may be towards us,—especially if we have reason to hope that severity will terminate but in a temporary discountenance and frown, not in a final rejection. Secondly,

Much more are we to submit our own secular concernments, which may be involved; that is, we ought only to pray we may have the continued, free profession and exercise of our religion, in conjunction with the comfortable enjoyment of the good things of this life, if that may consist with, and best serve, the honour of his great name. But if he do really make this judgment in our case, that we have so misdemeaned ourselves, and been so little really better to common observation, in our practice and conversation, than men of a worse religion; that he cannot without injury to his name and the reputation of his government countenance us against them by the visible favours of his providence; that it will not be honourable for him to protect us in our religion to so little purpose and while we so little answer the true design of it; that if we will retain our religion, (which we know we are upon no terms to quit,) we must suffer for it, and sanctify that name before men by our suffering, which we dishonoured by our sinning: we have nothing left us to do but to submit to God, to humble ourselves under his mighty hand, to accept the punishment of our sin, to put off our ornaments, expecting what he will do with us; and be content that our dwellings, our substance, our ease and rest, our liberties and lives, if he will have it so, be all sacrifices to the honour of that excellent name. Nor can our use of this argument want such submission without much insincerity.

Concerning this, therefore, look back to what was said on the former head.

Nor is there any hardship in the matter, that we are thus limited in our praying for what even nature itself teacheth us to desire, our safety, peace, and outward comforts; unless we count it a hardship that we are creatures, and that God is God, and that ours is not the supreme interest. The desires of the sensitive nature are not otherwise to be formed into petitions than by the direction of the rational,—that also being governed by a superadded, holy, divine nature; unto which it is a supreme and a vital law, that God is to be first eyed in everything. Reason teaches that so it should be; and grace makes it be so. And it ought to be far from us to think this a hardship, when, in reference to our greater and more considerable concernments, those of our souls and our eternal states, we are put upon no such dubious, suspenseful submission. He hath not, in these, left the matter at all doubtful or at any uncertainty, whether he will reckon it more honourable to his name to save or destroy eternally a sincerely penitent, believing, obedient soul. He hath settled a firm connexion between the felicity of such and his own glory, and never put it upon us, as any part of our duty, to be contented to perish for ever, that he may be glorified; or ever to ask ourselves whether we are so content or no. For he hath made such things our present, immediate, indispensable duty, as with which our perishing is not consistent; and upon supposition whereof, it is impossible we should not be happy. If we believe in his Son, and submit to his government, his name pleads irresistibly for our being saved by him. He can have no higher glory from us, than that we be to the praise of the glory of his grace, being once accepted in the Beloved.

Neither is it disallowed us to do the part of *concives*,—fellow-members of a community, civil or spiritual,—to pray very earnestly for our people, city, country, that are so justly dear to us. Only since prayer itself is an acknowledgment of his superiority to whom we pray, and we have no argu-

ment that we ought to hope should prevail, but that of his own name; we can but pray and plead as the nature of prayer and the import of that argument will admit; that is, with entire subjection to his holy and sovereign will, and subordination to his supreme interest, to whom we address ourselves in prayer.

Use.—And now the use this will be of to us, is partly to correct and reprehend our prayers, wherein they shall be found disagreeable to the true import of this argument; and partly to persuade unto and encourage such praying as shall be agreeable to it.

First, it justly and aptly serves to reprehend and correct such praying as disagrees with it; especially the carnality and the selfishness of our prayers. The use of this argument implies that the glory of God and the exaltation of his name should be the principal design of our prayers. Is it not in these respects much otherwise? We keep fast after fast, and make many prayers. And what is the chief design of them, or the thing we are most intent, and which our hearts are principally set upon? We see how God expostulates this matter: "When ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh month, even those seventy years, did ye at all fast unto me, even to me?"[1] Why, to whom can it be thought this people did keep fasts but unto God? Yes, no doubt they did eye him as the object, but not as the end. They were kept to him, but not for him, so as that his interest and glory was the thing principally designed in them; nor can it be, if the things we chiefly insist upon be such as have no connexion with his true interest, or subserviency to it. And let us inquire, upon these two heads, whether our prayers, in these respects, do not run in such a strain as that they cannot possibly be understood to mean him, or have a true reference to him.

1. In respect of the *carnality* of them. When we pray for the people of our own land, or for the Christian church more generally, what sort of evils is it that we find our hearts

[1] Zech. vii. 5.

most feelingly to deprecate and pray against? what are the good things we chiefly desire for them? We find ourselves, it is likely, to have somewhat a quick sense and dread of the calamities of war, depredation, oppression, persecution; and we feel probably somewhat of sympathy within ourselves, when we hear of any abroad, professing true, reformed Christianity, that suffer the spoiling of their goods, are banished from their pleasant homes, dragged to prisons, pressed with pinching necessities, for the sake of their religion: and it were well if our compassions were more enlarged in such cases. And if we should hear of nations depopulated, cities sacked, towns and countries deluged with blood and slaughter, these things would certainly have an astonishing sound in our ears. But have we any proportionable sense of the spiritual evils that waste and deform the Christian church, exhaust its strength and vigour, and blemish its beauty and glory;—ignorance, terrene inclination, glorying in the external forms of religion, while the life and power of it are unknown and denied; estrangement from God, real infidelity towards the Redeemer, veiled over by pretended, nominal Christianity; uncharitableness, pride, wrath, strife, envy, hatred, hypocrisy, deceitfulness towards God and man? We ought to lament and deprecate the former evils without overlooking these, or counting them less, or being less affected with them. We are apt to pray for peace unto the Christian community, for halcyon days, prosperity, the abundance of all outward blessings, in conjunction with the universal reception of such forms of religion as are most agreeable to our minds and inclinations. But do we as earnestly pray for the reviving of primitive Christianity, and that the Christian church may shine in "the beauties of holiness," in heavenliness, faith, love to God and one another; in simplicity, meekness, patience, humility, contempt of this present world, and purity from all the corruptions of it? This we chiefly ought to have done, without leaving the other undone: which, while it is left out of our prayers, or not more principally insisted on in them, how ill

do they admit of enforcement by this argument from the name of God! For do we think it is so very honourable to his name, to be the God of an opulent, luxurious, voluptuous, proud, wrathful, contentious people, under what religious form or denomination soever?

2. But also, do not our prayers chiefly *centre in ourselves*, while we make a customary (not understood) use in them of the name of God? And when we principally design ourselves in our prayers, what is it we covet most for ourselves? It is not agreeable to the holy, new, divine nature, to desire to engross spiritual good things to ourselves, when for others we desire only the good things of this earth. But if our prayers do only design the averting from ourselves outward calamities or inconveniences, and the obtaining only of ease, indulgence, and all grateful accommodations to our flesh, how absurd an hypocrisy is it to fashion up such a petition, by adding to it, "For thy name's sake!" As if the name of God did oblige him to consult the ease and repose of our flesh, when our souls thereby are made and continued the nurseries of all the evil, vicious inclinations, which show themselves in our practice, most of all to the dishonour of that name! What subordination is there here? Manifest is the opposition of our carnal interest to the interest and honour of the blessed name of God. If a malefactor, convicted of the highest crimes against the government, should petition for himself to this purpose,—that it will bring a great disreputation upon authority, and detract from the famed clemency and goodness of the prince, if any punishment should be inflicted on him for his offences, or if he be not indulged and suffered to persist in them; how would this petition sound with sober, intelligent men? It is no wonder our flesh regrets suffering; but it is strange our reason should be so lost as to think at random, that, right or wrong, the name of God is not otherwise to be indemnified than by its being saved from suffering. As if the gratification of our flesh, and the glory of God's name, were so very nearly related and so much akin to one another! And now this

carnal self-interest, insinuating itself, and thus distorting our prayers, is the radical evil in them, and the first and original part of their faultiness. For it is not likely we should love others better than ourselves; therefore we cannot go higher in supplication for others. But yet we inconsiderately mention the name of God for fashion's sake, though it be no way concerned in the matter, unless to vindicate and greaten itself in rejecting us and our prayers together.

Secondly, the further use of what hath been said upon this subject will be to persuade and engage us to have more regard to the name of God in our prayers, especially in our praying about national and public concernments, or such external concernments of our own as are involved with them: that in the habitual temper of our spirits we be so entirely and absolutely devoted to God, and the interest of his great name, that our prayers may savour of it, and be of an agreeable strain: that the inward sense of our souls may fully correspond to the true import of this argument, and our hearts may not reproach us when we use it, as only pretending God, but meaning ourselves, and that only our *carnal self;* the interest whereof alone can be in competition with that of God's name, and which, while it prevails in us, will be the measure of our prayers for others also: that the meaning of our words may not be one, and the meaning of our hearts another,—that we may truly mean as we speak, when we use the words, "For thy name's sake:" and that our hearts may bear us this true testimony, that we desire nothing but in due subordination to the glory of his name; external favours with limitations, only so far as they *may*, and spiritual blessings absolutely, because they certainly *will*, admit of this subordination. And to this purpose let it be considered,—

1. How unsuitable it is to the condition of a creature, that it should be otherwise. That were certainly a most uncreaturely prayer, that should be of a contrary tenour. Let us but digest and state the case aright in our own thoughts. Admit we are praying with great ardency on behalf of a people to which we are related, and who are also related to

God. It can scarce be thought we are more concerned for them than for ourselves; or that we love them more than we do ourselves. Our love to ourselves is the usual measure of our love to others: and that is higher, in the same kind, which is the measure of all besides that belongs to that kind. When, therefore, we are much concerned for the external felicity of such a people, it is very natural to be more deeply concerned for our own. Now if the sense of our hearts, in such a prayer, will not agree with the true import of these words, "For thy name's sake," because indeed we are more concerned for our own carnal peace, ease, and accommodation, than we are for the name of God; let us, that we may have the matter more clearly in view, put our request into such words as wherewith the sense of our hearts will truly agree; and will it not be thus, 'Lord, whatever becomes of thy name, let nothing be done that shall be grievous and disquieting to my flesh?' which is as much as to say, 'Quit thy throne to it, resign thy government, abandon all thy great interest, for the service and gratification of this animated clod of clay.' And do we not now begin to blush at our own prayer? We easily slide over such a matter as this, while our sense is more latent, and not distinctly reflected on; but let us have it before us 'conceptis verbis,'—let it appear with its own natural *face* and *look;* and now see what horror and detestableness it carries with it! And dare we now put up so treasonable a prayer? It would puzzle all our arithmetic to assign the 'quota pars,' or the *proportional part*, any of us is of the universe or the whole creation of God! And do I then think it fit that the heavens should roll for me, or all the mighty wheels of providence move only with regard to my convenience? If a worm in your garden were capable of thought, and because it is permitted to crawl there, should think, 'This garden was made for me, and everything in it ought to be ordered for my accommodation and pleasure;'—would you not wonder that such insolence, and a disposition to think so extravagantly, should be in conjunction with the thinking power or an ability to think at all? If we allow

ourselves in that far greater, infinitely more unbeseeming and disproportionable, petulancy, do we think, when the roller comes, it will scruple to crush us, or have regard to our immodest, pretenceless claim? Let us consider what little, minute things, how next to nothing, we are, even compared with all the rest of the world! What are we when compared with the Maker and Lord of it, in comparison of whom the whole "is but as the drop of a bucket, or the small dust of the balance,"—lighter than nothing, and vanity! We should more contemplate ourselves in such a comparison. Many, "comparing themselves with themselves, are not wise." While we confine and limit our eye only to ourselves, we seem great things,—fancy ourselves very considerable. But what am I? what is my single personality, *ipseity*, self-hood, call it what you will, to Him who is the All in all; whose being, actually or radically, comprehends all being, all that I can conceive, and the infinitely greater all that I cannot? If therefore I take in, with myself, the whole body of a people besides, that I am concerned for; and admit that a generous love to my country should make me prefer their concernments to my own; or that upon a higher account, as they are a people related to God, I could even lay down my life for them;—what are we all, and all our interests, to that of His name? And if we should all agree in a desire that our interest should be served upon the dishonour of that name, it were but a treasonable conspiracy against our common, rightful Lord: and a foolish one, being expressed in a prayer; as if we thought to engage him, by our faint breath, against himself. We are to desire no more for them than they may for themselves. And if we have joined in open sinning against him to that height that he shall judge he is obliged, for the vindication and honour of his name, (by which we have been called,) of his wisdom, holiness, and punitive justice, as openly to animadvert upon us, can we gainsay? If we knew of such a judgment, nothing could remain for us but shame and silence, conviction of ill desert, and patient bearing the punishment of our sin. And while we know it

not, yet because it is possible, we ought no otherwise to deprecate such a procedure against us, than as will consist with that possibility. To pray otherwise, if we make *no* mention of his name, is absurd presumption,—that we should wish, or imagine, he will prefer any concernments of ours to the steady order and decorum of his own government. But if we do make mention of it, it is a more absurd hypocrisy, to seem concerned for his name, when we intend only our own external advantages; as if we thought he that could answer our prayers, could not understand them! It is surely very unbecoming creatures, to bear themselves so towards the God that made them.

2. Consider, that to have a sense in our hearts truly agreeable to the proper meaning of this argument,—"For thy name's sake,"—is very suitable to the state of returning creatures, who are gathering themselves back to God out of the common apostasy, wherein all were engaged, and combined against that great Lord and Ruler of the world. In that defection every one did principally mind and set up for himself. Each one would be a god to himself; but all were, by consequence, against God. Whom to be for, they were divided, and of as many minds as there were men. Whom to be against, they were agreed, as if their common Lord was the common enemy; for his interest and theirs were opposite and irreconcilable. They were sunk and lost in sensuality, and had no other interest than that of their flesh. When man hath made himself a brute, he then thinks himself fittest to be a god. The interest of our souls must unite us with him; that of our flesh engages us against him. Some are, through the power of his grace, returning: what a pleasure would it be to us to behold ourselves among the *reduces*,—those that are upon their return; that are again taking the Lord only to be their God, and his interest for their only interest!

3. Consider that our very name, as we are Christians, obliges us to be of that obedient, happy number; for what is Christianity but the tendency of souls towards God, through

the mediation and under the conduct of Christ? Therefore is the initial precept of it, and the condition of our entrance into that blessed state, self-denial. We answer not our own name, further than as we are revolving and rolling back, out of our single and separate state, into our original, most natural state, of subordination to God; wherein only we are capable of union with him and final blessedness in him. This is discipleship to Christ, and the design of the Christian religion, to be subdued in our spirits and wrought down into compliance with the Divine will; to be meek, lowly, humble, patient, ready to take up the cross; to bear anything, lose anything, be anything, or be nothing, that God may be all in all. This is our conformity, not to the precepts only, but to the example too, of our great Lord; who, when he was "in the form of God," and "thought it not robbery to be equal with God, made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."[1] And hereupon, because he was so entirely devoted to the honour and service of God's great name, ("Father, glorify thy name," summed up his desires,) therefore God highly exalted him, and gave him "a name above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,"[2] etc. And whenever He shall have a church in the world, that He will think it fit to own with visible, unintermitted favours, it must consist of persons formed according to that pattern; and then, by losing their own name and little interests for God's, they will find all recovered, when their glorious Redeemer shall write upon them the name of his God, and the name of the city of his God, and his own new name.[3]

4. Let it be further, in the last place, considered, with what cheerfulness and confidence we may then pray, when our hearts are wrought to this pitch, that we sincerely design the honour of the Divine name as the most desirable thing; and which name above all things we covet to have glorified:

[1] Phil. ii. 6—8. [2] Ver. 9, 10. [3] Rev. iii. 12.

for we are sure of being heard, and to have the same answer which was given our Lord by a voice like that of thunder from heaven, when he prayed, "Father, glorify thy name," —"I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again."[1] Our hearts are not right in us till we can count this a pleasant, grateful answer. And if we can, we can never fail of it; for we are told, that "whatsoever we ask according to his will, he heareth us."[2] This will deliver our minds from suspense, when we pray for nothing whereof we are uncertain but with great deference and submission; and for nothing absolutely, and with greatest engagement of heart, but whereof we are certain. Upon such terms we may pray with great assurance, as Daniel did: "O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for thine own sake, O my God: for thy city and thy people are called by thy name."[3] And though an angel be not thereupon sent to tell us, as was to him, "So many weeks are determined upon thy people, and thy holy city,"—so the matter is expressed; as it were kindly giving back the interest in them to Daniel, with advantage, that he had before acknowledged unto God,—"to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity," etc.; yet we are assured of what reasonably ought to be as satisfying, that whatsoever shall befall our city or our people, shall end in the eternal glory of God, and of the city of God.

[1] John xii. 28. [2] 1 John v. 14. [3] Chap. ix. 19.

A SERMON

CONCERNING

UNION AMONG PROTESTANTS:

A DISCOURSE ANSWERING THE FOLLOWING QUESTION,

'WHAT MAY MOST HOPEFULLY BE ATTEMPTED TO ALLAY ANIMOSITIES AMONG PROTESTANTS, THAT OUR DIVISIONS MAY NOT BE OUR RUIN?'

ON UNION AMONG PROTESTANTS.

COLOSSIANS ii. 2.

"THAT THEIR HEARTS MIGHT BE COMFORTED, BEING KNIT TOGETHER IN LOVE, AND UNTO ALL RICHES OF THE FULL ASSURANCE OF UNDERSTANDING, TO THE ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF THE MYSTERY OF GOD, AND OF THE FATHER, AND OF CHRIST."

THIS question is propounded to me: "What may most hopefully be attempted to allay animosities among Protestants, that our divisions may not be our ruin?" I must here, in the first place, tell you how I understand this question.

First, as to the *end*, the preventing our ruin: I take the meaning chiefly to be, not the ruin of our estates, trade, houses, families; not our ruin, (in these respects,) who are Christians, but our ruin *as* we are Christians,—that is, the ruin of our Christianity itself or of the truly Christian interest among us.

Secondly, as for the *means* inquired after: I understand not the question to intend what is to be done or attempted by laws and public constitutions; as if our business were to teach our absent rulers or prescribe to them what they should do, to whom we have no present call or opportunity to apply ourselves. Nor, again, can it be thought our business to discuss the several questions that are controverted among us, and show in each what is the truth and right, wherewith every man's conscience ought to be satisfied, and in which we should all meet and unite; as if we had the vanity to think of performing, by an hour's discourse, what the voluminous writings of some ages have not performed. Much less are

we to attempt the persuading of any to go against an already formed judgment in these points of difference, for the sake of union; and to seek the peace of the church by breaking their peace with God and their own consciences.

But I take the question only to intend what serious Christians may and ought to endeavour, in their private capacities and agreeably with their own principles, towards the proposed end. And so I conceive the words read to you contain the materials of a direct and full answer to the question: which I reckon will appear by opening the *case* the apostle's words have reference to, that will be found a case like our own; and by opening the *words*, whereby their suitableness to *that* case will be seen, and, consequently, to *our* case also.

First, the case which these words have reference to (as indeed the general aspect of the epistle, and, in great part, of the other apostolical letters, looks much the same way) was in short this: that a numerous sect was already sprung up, that began so early to corrupt the simplicity and purity of the Christian religion, and very much to disturb the peace of the Christian church. A sort they were of partly Judaizing, partly Paganizing Christians,—the disciples, as they are reputed, of Simon Magus; who joined, with the name Christian, the rites and ceremonies of the Jews with the impurities, even in worship, of the Gentiles; denying the more principal doctrines and hating the holy design of Christianity itself, while they seemed to have assumed or to retain the name as it were on purpose the more effectually to wound and injure the Christian cause and interest: men of high pretence to knowledge,—whence they had the title of Gnostics,—filched partly from the Jewish cabalism, partly from the Pythagorean; by which pretence they insinuated the more plausibly with such as affected the knowledge of more hidden mysteries: whereto the apostle seems to have reference, where he adds, immediately after the text, that in Christ "were hid all the 'reasures of wisdom and knowledge,"[1] and says, he did purposely add it, "lest any man should beguile them with

[1] Col. ii. 3.

enticing words;" intimating there was no need to follow those vain pretenders out of an affectation of sublimer knowledge, and forsake Christ, in whom all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge were hid.

Of the progress and genius of this sect, not only some of the fathers of the church give an account,[1] but even a noted philosopher[2] among the heathens, who writes professedly against them, though not a word against Christians as such; both making it his business to refute their absurd doctrines,—that the world was in its nature evil, and not made by God, but by some evil angel, etc.—and representing them as men of most immoral principles and practices, worse, both in respect of their notions and morals, than Epicurus himself. It appears this sort of men did, in the apostles' days, not only set themselves with great art and industry to pervert as many professors of Christianity as they could, but found means (as they might by their compliances with the Jews, who were then much spread and numerously seated in sundry principal cities under the Roman power, and who were everywhere the bitterest enemies to Christianity) to raise persecution against *them* they could not pervert: which *some* passages seem to intimate in the Epistle to the Galatians, who, as that whole epistle shows, were much leavened by this sect, insomuch that the apostle is put "to travail as in birth again," to have "Christ formed in them," and to reduce them back to sincere Christianity:—namely, that some leaders of this sect so set the people's minds even against the apostle himself, that he began to be reputed by them as an enemy,[3] and was persecuted under that notion, because he would not comply with them in the matter of circumcision, urged as an engagement to the whole law of Moses: "If I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? then is the offence of the cross ceased:"[4] and that they were as mischievous as they could be to fellow-Christians, on the same account, biting and devouring them

[1] Clemens. Alexandr., Irenæus, Epiphanius, etc.
[2] Plotinus, *Ennead*, 2 lib. 9. [3] Gal. iv. 16. [4] Gal. v. 11.

that received not their corrupting additions to Christianity,—as the circumstances of the text show.[1]

How like a case this is to ours with our popish enemies, I need not tell you. And now in this case, when the faith of many was overthrown, so much hurt was already done, and the danger of greater was so manifest,—partly by the most insinuating methods of seduction, partly by the terror of persecution,—the great care was to secure the uncorrupted residue, and preserve unextinct the true Christian interest.

The urgency of this case puts the solicitous, concerned spirit of this great apostle into an inexpressible agony, as his words do intimate: "I would you knew what conflict I have," and not for these Colossians only, but "for them of Laodicea," (which was not very remote from Colosse), "and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh:" for it was a common case, and upon him lay "the care of all the churches." So that hence his musing, meditative mind, could not but be revolving many thoughts and casting about for expedients how the threatening danger might be obviated and averted. And these in the text, which he fastens upon and wherein his thoughts centre, how apt and proper they were to that case, and consequently to ours, which so little differs, will be seen,—

Secondly, by our opening and viewing the import of the text itself; wherein he,—

I. Proposes to himself the *end* which he apprehended was most desirable and above all things to be coveted for them: that their hearts might be "comforted;"—a word of much larger signification than in vulgar acceptation it is understood to be.[2] The word signifies, with profane as well as the sacred writers, not only to administer consolation to a grieved mind; but to exhort, quicken, excite, and animate, to plead and strive with, dull and stupid, wavering and unresolved minds. It was thought, indeed, comprehensive enough to express all the operations of the Divine Spirit upon the souls of men, when not only the Christian church, but the world, yet

[1] Gal. v. 15. [2] Παρακαλέω.

to be Christianized, was to be the subject of them; as we see.[1] In respect whereof that Holy Spirit hath its name of office, the *Paraclete*, from this word. And it being the passive that is here used, it signifies not only the endeavours themselves, which are used to the purpose here intended, but the effect of them wherein they all terminate, —a lively, vigorous, confirmed state and habit of soul; and that not indefinite, but determined to one thing, the Christian faith and profession,—which the apostle's drift and scope plainly show. It is not to be thought he so earnestly coveted and strove that they might be jocund, cheerful, abounding with joy and courage, in *any* course, right or wrong; but that they might be encouraged, established, confirmed in their Christianity. And if the word he here uses were large enough to signify (as was noted above) all that was necessary to make men Christians, it may, as well, all that is necessary to continue them such.

In short, the end which the apostle aims at, the "comfort"[2] intended to these Christians, was their establishment and confirmed state in their Christianity, as the effect of all apostolical or ministerial exhortations, persuasions, encouragements, or any whatsoever endeavours, made efficacious to that purpose by the powerful influence and operation of the Holy Ghost. And that it was no lower thing than this, we have sufficient evidence by comparing the close of the foregoing chapter with the beginning of this: where we find,[3] the avowed design of his preaching, warning, and teaching in all wisdom, was that he "might present every man perfect in Christ Jesus;" that whereas there were various arts and endeavours used to adulterate the Christian religion and pervert men from the simplicity of it, he might lose none, but to his very uttermost keep all in a possibility of being presented perfect in Christ Jesus at last,—that is, that they might be all entire, complete, and persevering Christians to the end. And for this, he adds,[4] he did labour, striving according to "His working, which wrought in him mightily." All his labour and

[1] John xvi. 8. [2] παράκλησις. [3] Col. i. 28. [4] Ver. 29.

the strivings of his soul, acted by Divine power and by a Spirit greater than his own, did aim at this end. And now hereupon, he intimates how fervid these his strivings were:[1] "I would you did but know" (what it is not for me to say) "what an *agony*[2] I endure, how great this my conflict is for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh." And for what? "That their hearts might be comforted," as we read; meaning manifestly the same thing he had expressed before,—that, notwithstanding all endeavours of others to the contrary, they might be complete and confirmed Christians to the last.

II. We have next to consider in the text *the means*, or what expedients the apostle conceives would be most effectually conducing to this blessed purpose. They are two;—mutual love to one another; and a clear, certain, efficacious faith of the gospel. The former is shortly and plainly expressed; the other by a copious and most emphatical *periphrasis*, or circumlocution. He most earnestly covets to have them knit together by both;[3] "compacted," as the word imports, in the one,—in love;[4] and "unto" or "into" the other, as that particle εἰς signifies.[5]

1. Mutual love to one another;—as much as to say, the thing were done, or much were done towards it, if they were "knit together in love," compacted, made all of a piece; if by love they did firmly cohere and cleave to one another: for then it would be one and all. And it is scarce ever supposable they should all agree to quit their religion at once; but if that were to be supposed, he adds another thing that would put all out of doubt:—

2. *A clear, certain, efficacious faith of the gospel.* For the several expressions that follow are but a description of such a faith. Where we are to note,—*what* he would have them apprehend; and the apprehensive *principle*.

i. *What he would have them apprehend;* namely, the sum and substance of the Christian doctrine, which he calls a mystery;

[1] Chap. ii. 1. [2] ἡλίκον ἀγῶνα. [3] συμβιβασθέντων.
[4] ἐν ἀγάπῃ. [5] εἰς πάντα, etc.

both because it was so in itself, and it is often spoken of under that name by our Lord himself,[1] and familiarly by this apostle,[2] and because of the high pretence of the Gnostics to the knowledge of mysteries; which *sometimes* he slights, especially being unaccompanied with love, as with them it most eminently was: "Though I understand all mysteries, and all knowledge, and have not charity, I am nothing:"[3] "Knowledge puffeth up,—love edifies."[4] *Sometimes*, as here, he makes the sincere doctrine of the gospel to outvie theirs herein, intimating that such as made profession of it could have no temptation to go over to them for the knowledge of mysteries, (unless a "mystery of iniquity" were more pleasing to them,) whose very religion was that great mystery of godliness: "God was manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory."[5]

Now this mystery he first more generally characterizes, by calling it "the mystery of God,"—a Divine mystery, not made one by merely human fiction; and then he very distinctly specifies it in the following words: "And of the Father and of Christ:"—where the former 'and' needs not be thought copulative, but exegetical, and might be read 'even,' or 'to wit:' or it may be read 'both,' as it is usual with the Greeks as well as the Latins,—when the copulative is to be repeated,—so to read the former. As if it were said, 'By the mystery of God, I mean not of God alone and abstractly considered, as if it were enough to you to be mere Deists, and that the whole superadded revelation concerning the Mediator might be looked upon with indifferency or neglect;' as by the Gnostics it was known *then* to be, and *afterwards* by some of their great leaders,—in the substance of it,—with downright hatred and opposition; 'but that which I so earnestly covet for you, and wherein I would have you unite and be all one, is the acknowledgment

[1] Matt. xiii. 11.
[2] Rom. xvi. 25; Eph. iii. 3, 9; Col. i. 26, and elsewhere.
[3] 1 Cor. xiii. 2. [4] Chap. viii. 1. [5] 1 Tim. iii. 16.

of the whole mystery of God,—that is, both of the Father and of Christ.'

ii. *The apprehensive principle;* which we may, by a general name, call faith, and accommodately enough to the name here given us of its object,—a mystery; which is elsewhere called "the mystery of faith,"[1] or a mystery to be *believed;* faith being the known principle of receiving the gospel revelation. But he here expresses it by words that signify "knowledge:"[2] thereby intimating that the faith of Christians is not to be a blind and unintelligent principle, but that though there were contained in the gospel mysteries never to be understood if God had not afforded a special revelation of them on purpose, yet, being revealed, we ought to have a clear and distinct, as well as lively and practical perception of them. By these two words, and the other expressions he joins in with the former, he seems to intimate two sorts of properties which belong to that faith of the gospel which he wishes to them.

First, the rectitude, clearness, and certainty of notion: secondly, the efficacy, impressiveness, and immediate aptitude to have influence upon practice, which he would have it carry with it. The latter properties supposing and depending on the former, he there highly exaggerates the matter, and heaps together expressions that might with most lively emphasis set forth the kind of that knowledge which he conceives would be of so great use to them. He wishes them a *σύνεσις*,—a clear, perspicacious knowledge; and an assurance even to a *plerophory*,—a *fulness of assurance*, in their knowledge of the truth of the gospel. Yea, he wishes them the 'riches,' *πλοῦτον*, yea, and 'all riches,' *πάντα πλοῦτον τῆς πληροφορίας*, of that full assurance or *plerophory* of understanding and knowledge of that truth; apprehending that this would certainly fix them in their faith and profession, so as they would never recede from it. As when in Christ's own days "many went back, and walked no more with him,"[3] that which retained others,—so that when Christ asks, "Will ye also go away?"[4] they presently answer, "Lord, to whom

[1] 1 Tim. iii. 9. [2] *σύνεσις* and *ἐπίγνωσις*. [3] John vi. 66. [4] Ver. 67.

shall we go?"—was, that what they believed of him was of greatest importance to them,—"Thou hast the words of eternal life;"[1] so their belief was with that assurance as to exclude all suspicion or doubt in the case: "And we believe, and are sure, that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God,"[2] and therefore neither canst want power to confer eternal life, as all thy words do import thy design and promise to do, nor truth to make good thy own plain words. And then he also knew that such a 'knowledge,'[3] would produce, what he further wishes them, an 'acknowledgment,'[4] an inward, vital owning, a cordial embrace, a lively perception of the same blessed truths; which must needs further most abundantly contribute to this their so much desired joint and unanimous stability.

And now these are the two expedients by which he reckons they would be so closely compacted together as that no subtlety or violence could endanger them,—mutual love and a clear, certain, operative faith of the gospel. If by the one they did cohere with each other, and by the other adhere to God in Christ: if the one might have with them the place, power, and bindingness of a cement; the other of a continual inclination, yieldingness, and compliance to the magnetism of the centre: they would never so fall asunder as to give any enemies opportunity to be the successful authors or the gratified spectators of their ruin.

Thus, therefore, I would sum up the sense of this scripture, and the answer to the question proposed: 'That the maintaining of sincere love among Christians and the improving of their faith to greater measures of clearness, certainty, and efficacy in reference to the substantials of Christianity, are to be endeavoured, as the best means to unite, establish, and preserve them against such as design the ruin of the truly Christian interest.' The case was at that time urging and important. A great and numerous party was formed of such as did nauseate the simplicity of the Christian religion, and hate the true design of it. All the care was what course was

[1] Ver. 68. [2] Ver. 69. [3] σύνεσις. [4] ἐπίγνωσις.

most proper and suitable to preserve the rest. And you see what was then thought most proper. Counsel was not taken to *this* effect,—and therefore Christians in a private capacity should not covet to have it so,—'Let us bind them by certain devised preter-evangelical canons to things never thought fit to be enjoined by Christ himself, severely urge the strict and uniform observance of them, make the terms of Christian communion straiter than he ever made them, add new rituals of our own to his institutions, and cut off from us all that never so conscientiously scruple them.' No; this was the practice of their common enemies, and it was to narrow and weaken the too much already diminished Christian interest. The "order" mentioned[1] might be comely enough, without things that were both unnecessary and offensive.

Nor was it consulted and resolved to agitate the controversy about this power and practice in perpetual, endless disputations, and stigmatise them that should not be enlightened and satisfied in these matters as schismatical and wilful, though they never so sincerely adhered to the doctrine and observed the laws of Christ;—that is, it was neither thought fit to urge the unsatisfied upon doubtful things against their consciences; nor to take order that continual endeavours should be used from age to age to satisfy them, or that the church should be always vexed with vain controversies about needless things, that,—if they were never so lawful,—might as well be let alone, without detriment to the Christian cause, and perhaps to its greater advantage. Yea, the attempt of imposing anything upon the disciples but what was necessary is judged "a tempting of God,"[2] a bringing the matter to a trial of skill with him, whether he could keep the church quiet, when they took so direct a course to distemper and trouble it. But it was thought necessary and sufficient, that all did unite and were knit together in the mutual love of one another, and in a joint adherence to the great mysteries of faith and salvation.

In the same case, when there were so many Antichrists

[1] Col. ii. 5. [2] Acts xv. 10.

abroad, and, (it is likely,) Ebion with his partakers made it their business to pervert the Christian doctrine, the same course is taken by the blessed apostle St. John,—only to endeavour the strengthening of these two vital principles, faith in Christ and love to fellow-Christians; as may be seen at large in his epistles. These he presses, as the great commandments upon the observation whereof he seems to account the safety and peace of the sincere did entirely depend: "This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment." [1] He puts upon Christians no other distinguishing test but "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him;"[2] is only solicitous that they did practise the commandment they had from the beginning,—that is, that they love one another,[3]—and that they did abide in the doctrine of Christ.[4]

The prudence and piety of those unerring guides of the church—themselves under the certain guidance of the Spirit of truth—directed them to bring the things wherein they would have Christians unite within as narrow a compass as was possible, neither multiplying articles of faith nor rites of worship. These two principles, as they were thought to answer the apostle's, would fully answer our design and present inquiry. And we may adventure to say of them, that they are both sufficient and necessary,—the apt and the only means to heal and save us; such as would effect our cure, and without which nothing will.

Nor shall I give other answer to the proposed question than what may be deduced from these two, considered according to what they are in themselves, and what they naturally lead and tend to. I shall consider them in the order wherein the apostle here mentions them, who, you see, reserves the more important of them to the latter place.

I. The sincere *love* of Christians to one another would be a happy means of preserving the truly Christian interest

[1] 1 John iii. 23. [2] Chap. v. 1. [3] 2 John 5. [4] Ver. 9.

among us. That this may be understood, we must rightly apprehend what kind of love it is that is here meant. It is specified by what we find in conjunction with it,—the understanding and acknowledgment of the mystery of Christianity; therefore it must be the love of Christians to one another *as such*. Whence we collect, lest we too much extend the object of it on the one hand or contract it on the other,—

1. That it is not the love only which we owe to one another as men, or human creatures merely, that is intended here. That were too much to enlarge it, as to our present consideration of it. For, under that common notion, we should be as much obliged to love the enemies we are to unite against, as the friends of religion we are to unite with, since all partake equally in human nature. It must be a more special love that shall have the desired influence in the present case. We cannot be peculiarly endeared and united to some more than to others upon a reason that is common to them with others. We are to love them that "are born of God" and are his children, otherwise than the children of men, or such of whom it may be said they "are of their father the devil;" them that appear to have been partakers of a Divine nature at another rate than them who have received a mere human, or also the diabolical nature.[1] Yet this peculiar love is not to be exclusive of the other which is common, but must suppose it, and be superadded to it, as the reason of it is superadded. For Christianity supposes humanity, and Divine grace human nature.

2. Nor is it a love to Christians of this or that party or denomination only. That were as much unduly to straiten and confine it. The love that is owing to Christians as such, —as it belongs to them only, so it belongs to *all* them who, in profession and practice, do own sincere and incorrupt Christianity. To limit our Christian love to a party of Christians, truly so called, is so far from serving the purpose now to be aimed at, that it resists and defeats it; and instead of a preservative union, infers most destructive divisions. It

[1] 1 John v. 1.

scatters what it should collect and gather. It is to love factiously, and with an unjust love, that refuses to give indifferently to every one his due,—for is there no love due to a disciple of Christ in the *name of a disciple?* It is founded in falsehood and a lie; denies them to be of the Christian community who really are so. It presumes to remove the ancient landmarks, not civil, but sacred; and draws on, not the people's curse only, but that of God himself. It is true —and who doubts it?—that I may and ought upon *special* reasons to love some more than others,—as relation, acquaintance, obligation by favours received from them, more eminent degrees of true worth and real goodness; but that signifies nothing to the withholding of that love which is due to a Christian as such, as that also ought not to prejudice the love I owe to a man as he is a man.

Nor am I so promiscuously to distribute this holy love as to place it at random upon every one that thinks it convenient for him to call himself a Christian; though I ought to love the very profession, while I know not who sincerely make it, and do plainly see that Jews and pagans were never worse enemies to Christ and his religion than a great part of the Christian world. But let my apprehensions be once set right concerning the true essentials of Christianity, (whether consisting in doctrinal or vital principles,) then will my love be duly carried to all in whom they are found, under one common notion which I come actually to apply to this or that person as particular occasions do occur; and so shall always be in a preparation of mind actually to unite in Christian love with every such person, whensoever such occasions do invite me to it. And do we now need to be told what such an impartial, truly Christian love would do to our common preservation and to prevent the ruin of the Christian interest?

i. How greatly would it contribute to the vigour of the Christian life! for so we should all equally hold the Head, "from which all the body, by joints and bands having nourishment ministered and knit together, increaseth with

the increase of God;" as afterwards in this chapter.[1] Thus,—as it is in that other parallel text of Scripture,—"speaking the truth in love, we shall grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body, unto the edifying of itself in love."[2] Obstructions that hinder the free circulation of blood and spirits do not more certainly infer languishings in the natural body, than the want of such a diffusive love shuts up and shrivels the destitute parts, and hinders the diffusion of a nutritive vital influence, in the body of Christ.

ii. It would inspire Christians generally with a sacred courage and fortitude, when they should know and even feel themselves knit together in love. How doth the revolt of any considerable part of an army discourage the rest; or if they be not entire and of a piece! Mutual love animates them, (as nothing more), when they are prepared to live and die together, and love hath before joined whom now their common danger also joins. They otherwise signify but as so many single persons, each one but caring and contriving how to shift for himself. Love makes them significant to one another; so as that every one understands himself to be the common care of all the rest. It makes Christians the more resolute in their adherence to truth and goodness, when, from their not-doubted love, they are sure of the help, the counsels, and prayers, of the Christian community; and apprehend, by their declining, they shall grieve those whom they love, and who they know love them. If any imagine themselves intended to be given up as sacrifices to the rage of the common enemy, their hearts are the apter to sink; they are most exposed to temptations to prevaricate; and the rest will be apt to expect the like usage from them, if themselves be reduced to the like exigency, and be liable to the same temptations.

[1] Col. ii. 19. [2] Eph. iv. 15, 16.

iii. It would certainly, in our present case, extinguish or abate the so contrary unhallowed fire of our anger and wrath towards one another; as the celestial beams do the baser culinary fire, which burns more fervently when the sun hath less power. Then would debates, if there must be any, be managed without intemperate heat. We should be remote from being angry that we cannot convey our own sentiments into another's mind; which, when we are, our business is the more remote; we make ourselves less capable of reasoning aptly to convince, and, because anger begets anger, as love doth love, render the other less susceptible of conviction. Why are we yet to learn "that the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God?" What is gained by it? So little doth angry contention about small matters avail, that even they that happen to have the better cause lose by it, and their advantage cannot recompense the damage and hurt that ensues to the church and to themselves. Our famous Davenant,[1] speaking of the noted controversy between Stephen, bishop of Rome, who, he says, as much as in him lay, did with a schismatical spirit tear the church; and Cyprian, who with great lenity and Christian charity professes that he would not break the Lord's peace for diversity of opinion, nor remove any from the right of communion; concludes that erring Cyprian deserved better of the church of Christ than orthodox Stephen. He thought *him* the schismatic whom he thought in the right, and that his orthodoxy, as it was accompanied, was more mischievous to the church than the other's error. Nor can a man do that hurt to others without suffering it more principally. The distemper of his own spirit, what can recompense? And how apt is it to grow in him; and, while it grows in himself, to propagate itself among others! Whereupon, if the want of love hinders the nourishment of the "Body," much more do the things which, when it is wanting, are wont to fill up its place. For as naturally as love begets love, so do wrath, envy, malice, calumny, beget one another, and spread a poison and virulency through

[1] *Sent. ad Duræum.*

the Body, which necessarily wastes and tends to destroy it. How soon did the Christian church cease to be itself, and the early vigour of primitive Christianity degenerate into insipid, spiritless formality, when once it became contentious! It broke into parties, sects multiplied, animosities grew high, and the grieved Spirit of love retired from it; which is grieved by nothing more than by bitterness, wrath, anger, etc., as the connexion of these two verses intimates: "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking, be put away from you, with all malice."[1] And to the same purpose is that: "Wherefore, laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, as new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby."[2] By this means religion, once dispirited, loses its majesty and awfulness, and even tempts and invites the assaults and insultation of enemies.

iv. It would oblige us to all acts of mutual kindness and friendship. If such a love did govern in us, we should be always ready to serve one another in love, to bear each other's burdens, to afford our mutual counsel and help to one another, even in our private affairs, if called thereto; especially in that which is our common concern, the preserving and promoting the interest of religion; and to our uttermost strengthen each other's hands herein. It would engage us to a free, amicable conversation with one another upon this account; would not let us do so absurd a thing as to confine our friendship to those of our own party,—which we might as reasonably to men of our own stature, or to those whose voice, and air, and look, and mien, were likest our own. It would make us not be ashamed to be seen in each other's company, or be shy of owning one another. We should not be to one another as Jews and Samaritans, that had no dealing with one another, or as the poet notes they were to other nations, 'Non monstrare vias eadem nisi sacra colenti,'—

[1] Eph. iv. 30, 31. [2] 1 Pet. ii. 1, 2.

'not so much as to show the way to one not of their religion.' There would be no partition wall through which love would not easily open a way of friendly commerce, by which we should insensibly slide more and more into one another's hearts. Whence also,—

v. Prejudices would cease, and jealousies concerning each other. A mutual confidence would be begotten. We should no more suspect one another of ill designs upon each other, than lest our right hand should wait an opportunity of cutting off the left. We should believe one another in our mutual professions, of whatsoever sort, both of kindness to one another, and that we really doubt and scruple the things which we say we do.

vi. This would hence make us earnestly covet an entire union in all the things wherein we differ, and contribute greatly to it. We are too prone many times to dislike things for the disliked persons' sake who practise them. And a prevailing disaffection makes us unapt to understand one another,—precludes our entrance into one another's mind and sense; which, if love did once open, and inclined us more to consider the matters of difference themselves than to imagine some reserved meaning and design of the persons that differ from us, it is likely we might find ourselves much nearer to one another than we did apprehend we were, and that it were a much easier step for the one side to go quite over to the other. But if that cannot be,—

vii. It would make us much more apt to yield to one another and abate all that ever we can, in order to as full an accommodation as is any way possible; that if we cannot agree upon either extreme we might at least meet in the middle. It would cause an emulation who should be larger in their grants to this purpose: as it was professed by Luther, when so much was done at Marburg towards an agreement between him and the Helvetians, that he would not allow that praise to the other party that they should be more desirous of peace and concord than he. Of which amicable conference, and of that afterwards at Wittenberg, and several other negotiations

to that purpose, account is given by divers ;[1] and insisted on by some of our own great divines as precedential to the concord they endeavoured between the Saxon and the Helvetian churches of later time,—as Bishop Morton, Bishop Hall, Bishop Davenant, in their several sentences or judgments written to Mr. Dury upon that subject.

And, indeed, when I have read the pacific writings of those eminent worthies, for the composing of those differences abroad, I could not but wonder that the same peaceable spirit did not endeavour with more effect the composing of our own much lesser differences at home. But the things of our peace were, as they still are, hid from our eyes; with the more visibly just severity by how much they have been nearer us, and more obvious to the easy view of any but an averse eye. It is not for us to prescribe, as was said, to persons that are now in so eminent stations as these were at that time. But may we not hope to find with such—and where should we rather expect to find it?—that compassion and mercifulness in imitation of the blessed Jesus, their Lord and ours, as to consider and study the necessities of souls in these respects, and at least willingly to connive at and very heartily approve some indulgences and abatements in the administrations of the inferior clergy, as they may not think fit themselves positively to order and enjoin? Otherwise I believe it could not but give some trouble to a conscientious conforming minister, if a sober, pious person, sound in the faith and of a regular life, should tell him he is willing to use his ministry in some of the ordinances of Christ, if only he would abate or dispense with some annexed ceremony which in conscience he dare not use or admit of. I believe it would trouble such a minister to deal with a person of this character as a pagan, because of his scruple; and put him upon considering whether he ought not rather to dispense with man's rule than with God's. I know what the same Bishop Davenant hath expressly said,—that 'he that believes the things contained in the Apostles'

[1] Hospinian. *Histor. Sacramentar.*; Thuanus, etc.: though, by Scultetus' account, that pretence was too little answered.

Creed, and endeavours to live a life agreeable to the precepts of Christ, ought not to be expunged from the roll of Christians nor be driven from communion with the other members of any church whatsoever.' However, truly Christian love would do herein all that it can, supplying the rest by grief that it can do no more.

viii. It would certainly make us abstain from mutual censures of one another, as insincere, for our remaining differences. Charity, that thinks no evil, would make us not need the reproof:[1] "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant?" The common aptness hereunto among us shows how little that divine principle rules in our hearts; that, in defiance of our rule and the authority of the great God and our blessed Redeemer, to whom all judgment is committed, and who hath so expressly forbidden us to judge, "lest we be judged,"[2] we give ourselves so vast a liberty; and set no other bounds to our usurped licence of judging than nature hath set to our power of thinking;—that is, think all the mischievous thoughts of them that differ from us that we know how to devise or invent; as if we would say, 'Our thoughts'—and then, by an easy advance, 'our tongues'—'are our own; who is lord over us?' I animadvert not on this as the fault of one party, but wheresoever it lies; as God knows how diffused a poison this is, among them that are satisfied with the public constitutions towards them that dissent from them, and with these back again towards them, and with the several parties of both these towards one another. This uniting, knitting love would make us refrain, not merely from the restraint of God's laws in this case, but from a benign disposition, as that which the temper of our spirits would abhor from: so that such as are well content with the public forms and rites of worship would have no inclination to judge them that apprehend not things with *their* understandings, nor relish with their taste, as persons that therefore have cut themselves off from Christ, and the body of Christ. They might learn better from the Cassandrian moderation, and from the

[1] Rom. xiv. 4. [2] Matt. vii. 1.

avowed sentiments of that man,[1]—whose temper is better to be liked than his terms of union,—who, speaking of such as, being formerly rejected (meaning the Protestants) for finding fault with abuses in the church, had, by the urgency of their conscience, altered somewhat in the way of their teaching and the form of their service, and are therefore said to have fallen off from the church, and are numbered among heretics and schismatics: 'It is,' saith he, 'to be inquired how rightly and justly this is determined of them. For there is to be considered, as to the church, the head and the body. From the head there is no departure but by doctrine disagreeable to Christ the Head; from the body there is no departure by diversity of rites and opinions, but only by the defect of charity.' So that this learned Romanist neither thinks them heretics that hold the head; nor schismatics,—for such differences as ours are,—from the rest of the body, if love and charity towards them remain. And again, where this love remains and bears rule, it can as little be that they who are unsatisfied with the way of worship that more generally obtains should censure them that are satisfied, as insincere, merely because of this difference. It cannot permit that we should think all the black thoughts we can invent of them; as if because they have not our consciences they had none; or because they see not with our eyes, they were therefore both utterly and wilfully blind. To be here more particular; the most, you know, are for the public way of worship; and of these, some are for it as tolerable only, others as the best way, and think all other ways of worshipping God in assemblies—being forbidden as they think by a just law—sinful. Others, dissenting, are of several sorts. Some think the conformity required of *ministers* sinful, because of previous terms required of them which they judge to be so; but not that which is required of the *people*. Of which sort, some that think it not simply unlawful, find it however less edifying to them: and though they can therefore partake in it at sometimes, think themselves more ordinarily bound to

[1] Cassander: De officio pii ac publicæ tranquillitatis vere amantis viri.

attend such other means as they find more conducing to their spiritual profit and advantage; judging they have an undoubted right from Christ, anciently allowed from age to age in the best times of the Christian church, and never justly taken from them, of choosing the pastors to whose ordinary care and conduct they shall commit their souls. Others judge the public way simply unlawful, and therefore judge themselves bound to decline it wholly; and are the more averse to any participation in it, as apprehending it to have no suitableness or aptitude to profit their souls; wherein they are the more confirmed that they believe not God will ever bless the means which he hath not appointed. Now how apt all these are unto very severe censures of one another, *he* knows not the age that is ignorant:—one sort censuring the other as humorsome, factious, schismatical; the others them back again, as formal, popishly affected, destitute of any savour of spiritual things, having nothing of God in them, or of the life and power of godliness.

Now is this suitable to the love that should rule among Christians? or to the reverence we ought to have for that authority that forbids such judging? It ought to be considered, both that all have not the same understanding nor the same gust and relish of things.

Not the same *understanding*. And therefore, where conscience hath the same rule, it cannot have, with every one, the same actual latitude, that rule being so very diversely understood; which different estimate of consciences the apostle hath express reference to, in that large and most healing discourse of his.[1] "One," saith he,[2] "believeth that he may eat all things; another, who is weak, eateth herbs." Nor doth he in reference to such doubted things determine what all should do or not do, by particular rules concerning every such case that was then depending, which it seems he reckoned was not necessary; or that might afterwards fall out, which was little to be expected. But he lays down one general rule against judging one another, which he presses with that

[1] Rom. xiv. [2] Ver. 2.

authority and such awful reasons as might make a Christian heart tremble to be guilty of it.

And in reference to the mentioned differences among ourselves, as well as others no nearer to the substantials and vitals of our religion, there is somewhat else to be done than to conclude against a man's sincerity because of such differing sentiments and practices; and which certainly would be done if truly Christian love, or even justice itself, did take place as they ought. It would be considered what these several differing parties have to say for themselves, what reasons they may allege, and whether, though they be not sufficient to justify their several opinions and practices,—as all cannot be in the right,—they be not such as by which a conscientious man, a sincere fearer of God, may be swayed; so as to take the way which he is found in by the ducture of an upright though misguided conscience, and not as being under the government of depraved, vicious inclination.

As to those that can and do yield the conformity that is required of ministers,—though perhaps they wish some things altered, why may it not be supposed they sincerely think (though it should be mistakingly) that the things more liable to exception are capable of a sense wherein they are not unlawful; and not being so, they think themselves bound to take the opportunity which they this way obtain, of doing good to the souls of men? Others also apprehending it lawful, how possible is it to them from a certain reverence they have for antiquity and for our own first reformers, to think it best and fittest to be continued! Nor is it unsupposable that many of the laity may upon the same grounds have the same apprehensions.

Again; divers in the ministry, judging the terms unlawful upon which only they can have liberty for the public exercise of it, is it not possible they may, with a sincere conscience, think themselves not therefore obliged wholly to renounce their calling and office, to which they were duly set apart and had, by their own solemn vow, given up themselves; but to do so much of the work of it as they can have opportunity

for? And whereas of the people, some may think the public forms and ways of worship not simply unlawful, but find them less edifying to them than other means which the providence of God affords them, and therefore do more ordinarily attend those, though sometimes also the other;— why should it be thought, on the one hand or the other, that it is so little possible they should be guided by reasonable and conscientious considerations herein, that nothing but corrupt inclination must be understood to govern them? Is it not supposable that accounting the public worship substantially agreeable to divine institution, though in some accidentals too disagreeable, they may think there is more to incline them at some times to attend it than totally to disown it? For what worship is there on earth that is in all things incorrupt? And they may apprehend it fit to testify their union with the sincere Christians that may be statedly under that form, and especially in a time when the contest is so high in the world between them that profess the substance of reformed Christianity and them that have so much deformed it; and may conceive it becoming them, at some times, to express their own unconfinedness to a party, and to use that liberty which, they think, should not be judged by another man's conscience; which yet they would have regard to, where there are not greater reasons to preponderate. They are indeed under a disadvantage, (with them that are apt to use a greater liberty in their censures than they do in their practice in these matters,) when it falls out that their partial compliance is the means of their security from penalties; and *their* disadvantage is greater, whose judgment to this purpose hath not been formerly declared and made known. But they for shame ought to be silent, whose total compliance gains them not only immunity, but great emoluments; and *that* perhaps yielded, not according to a former, but (at that time when the opportunity occurred) a new and altered judgment. They may, however, know themselves to be moved by greater ends than secular interest; and so may these we now speak of, and yet may think the preservation

of their earthly portion, wherewith they are to glorify God in this world, not too little an end to be designed and endeavoured by lawful means. It were a very uncouth and sinful thing to do a spiritual action for a carnal end; but if the thing sincerely and supremely designed be the glory of God, that is the most spiritual end; if it be not, that ought to be changed which is wrong, not that which is right;—the unlawful end, not the lawful action, if it be lawful: if it be not, their good end will not justify their action, but it will their sincerity; which is all that this discourse intends.

And then for such as decline the public worship totally, as judging it simply unlawful; is it not possible they may be led to that practice by somewhat else than humour and factious inclination? Have they not that to say, which may at least seem solid and strong to a conscientious man? How jealous God did heretofore show himself in all the affairs of his worship! How particular in the appointment even of the smallest things he would have appertain to it! How unsuitable multiplied ceremonies are to the mature state of the church! And how sensibly burdensome they were to the disciples of the first age, as a yoke not to be borne! And therefore God himself, when the season of maturity and the fulness of time came, thought fit to abrogate those of his own former appointment, with no probable design to allow men the liberty of substituting others in their room. Why is it not to be thought, that the fear of the great God withholds them from doing what they judge would offend him; and that, if they err, it is for fear of erring? Why can nothing be thought on whereto to impute their practice, but peevish humour? especially if that be considered, (which is common to these two last-mentioned sorts of men,) that they sensibly find other means more edifying to them, or expect them only to be so, if the other be thought unlawful. If they be thought merely lawful, and such as may therefore be used upon weighty reasons at some times, but are found less edifying, who can doubt but I ought to use for my soul—at least in an ordinary course—the aptest means that I can

ordinarily have for the promoting its edification and salvation? Do we not reckon ourselves to owe so much even to our bodies? And what is another man's opinion to signify against my sense and constant experience? Is there not such a thing as a mental *idiosyncrasy* (or peculiarity of temper) as well as a bodily? and whereto what is most agreeable, any man that is not destitute of ordinary understanding is the fittest judge himself; as every one that is not a mere fool, is so much a physician as to know what diet suits him best.

And if it be said against the former of these two sorts, 'Are they not at all times obliged to use the means which are most edifying?' they may say, 'At all times when they have nothing to outweigh their own present edification.' But it is not impossible that a conscientious judgment may esteem all the fore-mentioned considerations concurring to be of more weight than the greater advantage hoped to be gained in that one hour. Nor need any man be ashamed professedly to avow that which may seem the least of them, the saving of himself from temporal ruin. For he is to be accountable to God for what portion he hath intrusted him with of the good things of this life, and is not to throw it away without sufficient cause. Who sees not that more is allowed, and ordinarily done, without scruple or censure, upon the like account? as, to omit the hearing of a sermon, if at that time one's house be on fire; yea, or if it be to save my neighbour's; or the plucking of an ox or sheep out of a ditch on the Lord's day, when I might have been employed at that time in the solemn worship of God to my spiritual advantage. A mere commutation unto less advantage, upon an equally or more urgent necessity, is less than omission. And they that shall have learned, as our Saviour directs, what that means, "I will have mercy, and not sacrifice," will not condemn the guiltless.

Only, such are concerned first to search well and be satisfied concerning the lawfulness of their action in itself; that they do it not with a self-condemning conscience, nor with a groundlessly self-justifying one; and then especially to see to

it that their end be right,—God's interest, not their own, otherwise than in a due, entire subordination to his. We can never act innocently or comfortably in anything, till he be in everything more absolutely our All in all; and have much more reason to be scrupulous, and, if others knew our hearts, were much more liable to censure, that in our common affairs he is so much forgotten; that we live not more entirely to him: which we little animadvert upon, and are very officious to cast motes out of our brother's eye, when this beam is in our own.

The design of mentioning these hints of reasons for so different judgments and practices, is not to show which are strongest and ought to prevail; which cannot be the business of so short a discourse as this, and so much of another nature: but to show, that while there is anything colourable to be alleged for this or that way, true Christian love, compassion of common human frailty, and a duly humble sense of a man's own, would oblige him to think that conscience toward God may have a greater hand (though, with some, misguided itself) in guiding men the different ways they take than is commonly thought; and to consider, though such and such reasons seem not weighty to me, they may to some others, who are as much afraid of sinning against God as I, and perhaps their understandings as good in other matters as mine. It would be considered how really difficult the controversy is about the ceremonies, and some other parts of conformity. Perhaps few metaphysical questions are disputed with more subtlety than that controversy is managed with, by Archbishop Whitgift, Bishop Morton, Doctor Burgess, Doctor Ames, Cartwright, Calderwood, and others. And how very easily possible and pardonable is it to unlearned persons, or of weaker intellectuals,—being obliged in order to their practice to give a judgment in reference to these things one way or other,—to judge amiss! Why should we expect every sincerely pious man to be able to hit the very point of truth and right in matters that belong, as Bishop Davenant once said in another case, 'non ad fidem

fundamentalem, sed ad peritiam theologicam; et fortasse ne ad hanc quidem, sed aliquando ad curiositatem theologorum;' —'not to the foundation of our faith, but to the skill of divines; and perhaps not to this neither, but sometimes only to their curiosity.' What were to be done in reference to so nicely disputable things,—made part of the terms of Christian communion,—is more the matter of our wish than hope, till by a gracious influence God better men's minds, or by a more deeply felt necessity bring us to understand what is to be done. Our case is ill when only 'vexatio dat intellectum,'—when 'nothing but sorrow and suffering will make us wise;' which is very likely from the righteous hand of God to be our common lot.

In the meantime, it is hard to think that he cannot be a sincerely pious man, whose understanding is not capable of so difficult things, as to make a certainly right judgment about them. 'In absoluto et facili stat æternitas.' And why should not the communion of persons going into a blessed eternity have the same measure?

And besides the different size and capacity of men's understandings, and consequently of their conscientious determinations, there are also as *differing relishes* of these things; which Christian love would oblige a man to consider with equanimity, so as thereupon to refrain hard censures. All good men have not the same relish of the various forms and modes of dispensing the truths and ordinances of Christ. Some of our suffering brethren in Queen Mary's days are said to have found great spiritual refreshing by the Common Prayer: and, in our own days, some may profess to have their hearts warmed, their affections raised and elevated by it. They are no rule to us; but it would less become us, hereupon, to suspect their sincerity than our own. Others, again, cannot relish such modes of worship, when, in the ministry of such as use them not, they find a very sensible delight and savour.

And this, by the way, shows the great difference between such things as have their evidence and goodness from God

himself, and those that borrow their recommendableness only from human device. All good men, in all the times and ages of the Christian church, have a constant value and love for the great substantials of religion, which have in them that inward evidence and excellency as command and captivate a rectified mind and heart; whereas the mere external forms of it, the outward dress and garb, are variously esteemed and despised, liked and disliked, by the same sort of men,—that is, by very sincere lovers of God,—not only in divers times and ages, but even in the same time. How different hath the esteem been of the liturgic forms with them who bear the *same* mind,—full of reverence and love towards religion itself!—as that habit is thought decent at one time, which in another is despicably ridiculous; whereas a person in himself comely and graceful, is always accounted so by all, and at all times.

Now this various gust and relish cannot but have influence, more remotely, upon the conscientious determination of our choice concerning our usual way of worshipping God. For how should I edify by what is disgustful to me? Though it be true that our spiritual edification lies more in the informing of our judgments and confirming our resolutions than in the gusts and relishes of affection; yet who sees not that these are of great use even to the other, and that it is necessary that at least there be not a disgust or antipathy? What is constantly less grateful will certainly be less nutritive. That is usually necessary to nourishment, though alone it be not sufficient; as it is in the matter of bodily repasts. Who can, without great prejudice, be bound to eat always of a food that he disrelishes, though he may without much inconvenience, for a valuable reason, do it at some time?

And they that think all this alleged difference is but fancy, show they understand little of human nature, and less of religion; though they may have that in themselves too which they do not so distinctly reflect upon,—even that peculiar gust and relish which they make so little account of. For have they not as great a disgust of the others' way, as

they have of theirs? Would they not as much regret to be tied to theirs? Have they not as great a liking of their own? And doth not common experience show that there are as different mental relishes as bodily? How comes one man in the matters of literature to savour metaphysics, another mathematics, another history, and the like? and no man's genius can be forced in these things. Why may there not be the like difference in the matters of religion? And I would fain know what that religion is worth that is without a gust and savour,—that is insipid and unpleasant; much more that would, being used in a constant course this or that way, be nauseous and offensive.

If indeed men nauseate that which is necessary for them,—the gospel, for instance, or religion itself,—that is certainly such a distemper as, if the grace of God overcome it not, will be mortal to them; and we are not to think of relieving them by withdrawing the offending object, which itself must be the means of their cure. But is there any parity between the substance of religion, which is of God's appointing, and the superadded modes of it, that are of our own?

Upon the whole, nothing is more agreeable, either to this divine principle of love,—nothing, within our compass, more conducible to our end, the ceasing of our differences, (which are most likely to die and vanish by neglect,) or their ceasing to be inconvenient to us,—than to bear calm and placid minds towards one another under them, to banish all hard thoughts because of them. If I can contribute no way else to union,—from this holy dictate and law of the Spirit of love, I can at least abstain from censuring my fellow-Christians. It is the easiest thing in the world, one would think, *not to do;* especially not to do a thing of itself ungrateful to a well-tempered mind: and a great privilege not to be obliged to judge another man's conscience and practice, when it is so easy to misjudge and do wrong; most of all when the matter wherein I presume to sit in judgment upon another is of so high a nature as the posture of his heart Godward,—a matter peculiarly belonging to another tribunal, of Divine cogni-

zance, and which we all confess to be only known to God himself. And if I would take upon me to conclude a man insincere and a hypocrite, only because he is not of my mind in these smaller things that are controverted among us, how would I form my argument? No one can with sincerity differ from that man whose understanding is so good and clear as to apprehend all things with absolute certainty, just as they are; and then go on to assume, (and a strange assuming it must be,) 'But my understanding is so good and clear as,' etc. It is hard to say whether the uncharitableness of the one assertion, or the arrogance of the other, is greater; and whether both be more immoral or absurd. But the impiety is worst of all; for how insolently doth such a man take upon him to make a new gospel, and other terms of salvation than God hath made! When his sentiments and determinations of things which God hath never made necessary, must be the measure and rule of life and death to men, how is the throne and judicial power of the Redeemer usurped, which he hath founded in his blood! "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth: yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand.....For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living. But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at naught thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God."[1] One would think they that lay no restraint upon themselves in this matter of judging their brethren upon very light occasion, reckon this chapter came by chance into the Bible: and that our Lord spake himself, at random, words that had no meaning, when he said, "Judge not, that ye be not judged,"[2] etc. What man that fears God would not dread to be the framer of a new gospel, and of new terms of salvation? It is a great solace, indeed, to a sincere mind, but implies a severe rebuke in the

[1] Rom. xiv. 4, 9—11. [2] Matt. vii. 1.

meantime to such a self-assuming, censorious spirit, that it may in such a case be so truly said, 'It is a much easier thing to please God than man.'

They that find this measure will have the better of it, if they can abstain from retaliating, whenas the reason of it is the same on both sides. For they may say, 'You are to remember I differ no more from you in this matter than you do from me; and if I judge not you about it, what greater reason have you to judge me?' And they have little reason to value such a man's judgment concerning their duty in a doubtful matter, who cannot see his own in so plain a case. The matter for which they judge me may be very doubtful, but nothing can be plainer than that they ought not so to judge.

ix. A due Christian love would oblige us, after competent endeavours of mutual satisfaction about the matters wherein we differ, to forbear further urging of one another concerning them: which urging may be two ways,—either by application to our affections or to our reason and judgment.

Some, perhaps, find it more suitable to their own temper and measure of understanding and conscience, to go the former way; and only vehemently persuade to do the thing wherein the other shall comply with them and in some sort justify the course which they have taken, without regard to the other's conscience; press them right or wrong to fall in with them; sometimes labouring to work upon their kindness by flattery, sometimes upon their fear by threats and menaces. Sincere love would certainly abhor to do thus. Would it let me violate another's conscience any way? The love I bear to a fellow-Christian, if it be true,—having for its measure that wherewith I love myself,—would no more let me do it than hurt the apple of mine own eye. An inspirited, waking conscience is as tender a thing, and capable of a worse sort of hurt. If some have more latitude than I, and think what they *may* do, in present circumstances, so far as they may they *must;* would it not be the dictate of love patiently to admit it, especially when it comes to suffering?

For let me put my own soul in his soul's stead, and would I be willing to suffer upon another man's conscience, and not upon my own; and forfeit the consolations which in a suffering condition belong to them who for conscience towards God endure grief? Would I, if I loved them, be content they had the grief and did want the consolation? There will be still found, in a state of suffering, somewhat that will prove a common cause to good men, wherein they will most entirely agree, whatsoever smaller things they may differ in;—as the pious bishops Ridley and Hooper well agreed upon a martyrdom at the stake, in the same important cause, who before had differed somewhat angrily about some ceremonies: concerning which difference how pathetical is the letter[1] of the former of these to the other, when both were prisoners,—the one at Oxford, the other at London,—on the same account. 'But now, my dear brother,' saith he, 'forasmuch as we thoroughly agree and wholly consent together in those things which are the grounds and substantial points of our religion, against the which the world so furiously rageth in these our days,—howsoever in time past, by certain by-matters and circumstances of religion, your wisdom and my simplicity, I grant, have a little jarred, each of us following the abundance of his own sense and judgment,—now, I say, be you assured, that even with my whole heart, God is my witness, in the bowels of Christ, I love you in the truth, and for the truth's sake, which abideth in us, and, as I am persuaded, shall, by the grace of God, abide in us for evermore.'

Again; if others have less latitude, it would be far from us to add to the affliction they are liable to upon that very account, by a vexatious urging and importuning them; especially to do it with insulting threats and menaces, and labour to overawe their brethren, against their consciences, into the embracing of their sentiments and way. Is it possible a Christian should not understand how necessary it is to every one's duty and peace, that he exactly follow that direction of the apostle's, and esteem it most sacred,[2] "Let

[1] Fox's *Martyrology*. [2] Rom. xiv. 5.

every man be fully persuaded in his own mind;" and that we firmly resolve never to do anything with regret or a misgiving heart, at least? Not against a prevailing doubt, for in very doubtful cases to be rid of all 'formido oppositi,' or suspicion that the matter may be otherwise, is perhaps impossible to me; but to do anything against the preponderating inclination of my judgment and conscience, were great wickedness, and such as, if it were known, would make me unfit for any communion whatsoever. And I do here appeal to you who most severely blame any of us for our dissent from you, whether, if we should thus declare to you, 'That it is truly against our consciences to communicate with you upon your terms, we believe we should greatly offend God in it, and draw upon us his displeasure; but yet to please you, and prevent our temporal inconvenience or ruin, we will do it;'—I appeal to you, I say, whether we should not hereby make ourselves incapable of any Christian communion with you or any others? This is then the plain state of the case, and you do even put these words into our mouths: 'If we follow the dictate of our consciences, we must decline you; if we go against it, you must decline us, supposing we declare it; if we declare it not, we have nothing to qualify us for your communion but hypocrisy and dissimulation! And what do you gain by such an accession to the church? You have gained, in any such case, not half the man,—the outside, the carcass only, or the shadow of the man; that is, when you have debauched our consciences, when you have spoiled us, and made us worth nothing, then we are yours,—wherein you show nothing of love, either to us or to yourselves!'

Others again, that are themselves men of more reason and conscience, take the somewhat more manly and Christian course; and bend themselves by argument to convince the reason, and satisfy the consciences of such as differ from them. But herein also there may be an excess, that is unprofitable and grievous to those they would work upon by this course; and from which, therefore, Christian love, studying the peace and quiet of their brethren, would restrain

them. I say from the ungrateful *excess* of such an endeavour; for I would fain know, can there not herein be an excess? Is it not supposable that they who differ from me in such lesser things, may be sometime arrived to a settlement and fixedness of judgment in them, as well as I? Is it not possible they have weighed the moments of things as much as I have done? Is such a cause infinite? Is it not possible that all may have been said in it which is to be said, and the matter have been sifted to the very bran; so that all my further arguings may serve but to argue my vain self-confidence, or aboundingness in my own sense, as if all wisdom were to die with me! Or what if they serve at length but to show the incapacity of the subject to be wrought upon, and the different complexion of his mind I am treating with? All cannot receive all things: we cannot make our sentiments enter with everyone. Perhaps they show the weakness of his understanding; and then hath that direction of the apostle no authority with us: "Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations?"[1] He whom we account our weaker brother, and of slower understanding, must be received, not cast out of communion; and because God himself "hath received him:"[2]—as much as to say, 'Is he thought fit for God's communion, notwithstanding his unsatisfied scruple, and is he unfit for yours?' And he is not to be vexed and importuned with continual disputation, if that apostolical precept be of any value with us. Sometime, at least, we should think we have tried in such a case as far as is fit, and driven the nail as far as it will go. Is it not possible such a matter may be agitated beyond the value of it, and that more time and pains may be spent upon it than it is worth? The obscurity and perplexity of the controversy shows the less necessity. Things most necessary are most plain. Must we always, in matters of confessedly little moment, be inculcating the same thing, rolling endlessly the returning stone, and obtruding our offensive *crambe?* Perhaps, as no good is done, we do much

[1] Rom. xiv. 1. [2] As verse 3.

hurt. When is the saw of disputation long drawn about one thing, without ill effects? Reason having at length spent its strength, grows, as weak people do, peevish and froward; degenerates into anger and clamour. In greater differences than our present ones, between the Protestant churches abroad, some of more prudent and peaceable minds have earnestly pressed the laying aside of disputes, and putting a period by consent to their theological wars. 'Solitarum disputationum labyrinthos ne ingredi quidem conentur,' said a great divine,[1] in his days, in reference to those controversies that he would have had composed by an amicable, brotherly conference. And that king of Navarre, who at that time seemed highly concerned for the peace and welfare of the reformed churches, (afterwards Henry the Fourth of France,) in his negotiations with divers princes to that purpose, gave special instructions to his ambassador much to insist upon this: 'Ut acerbis illis contentionibus, quibus, et verbis, rixati sunt inter se theologi, et scriptis, et ejusmodi disputationibus silentio tandem finis imponatur, ut Christiana charitas et animorum fraterna conjunctio revocetur;'[2]— 'That till other remedies could be used, an end might be put to bitter contentions and disputations, that Christian love and a brotherly union might be restored.' And who sees not how much this would conduce to peace and union in our case too? Who sees it not, that is a hearty lover of peace; and that is not intent upon continuing and keeping a-foot a controversy, not so much as a means to that, but as an end; contending for contention's sake, and as a thing which he loves and delights in for itself! I am sure love to our brethren would not let us continually molest and importune them to no purpose. And it is fit they that urge to us, 'these are little things which they importune us about,' should know we have great things to mind, of eternal concernment to us, and that we cannot be always at leisure to mind *little* things,

[1] Davenant, *Sent. ad Duræum.*

[2] Mandat. Hen. Reg. Navar. Jacobo Sigurtæ Legato suo, etc., apud Goldastum.

beyond the proportion of our little time on earth, and the little value of the things themselves.

x. Sincere love restored and exercised more among us would certainly make us forbear reviling and exposing one another, and the industrious seeking one another's ruin. For such as can allow themselves to do anything that hath this tendency, not to preserve public order, but to gratify their private ill-will; not in a sudden heat and passion, but deliberately and so as to pursue a formed design to this purpose;—if such men were capable of being reasoned with, (though it were to as good purpose to talk to a storm, or reason with a whirlwind or a flame of fire,) I would ask them, 'What! are you altogether unatonable? Will nothing divert you from this pursuit? If anything, what will? What more gentle thing than our destruction do you seek, or will content you? Is it our communion? And do you so recommend yourselves? Do you not know Cain is said to have been "of that wicked one, and slew his brother;" and that "whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer;" and "that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him?"[1] Is it not said that such "are of their father the devil, and the lusts of their father they will do;" who was a "murderer from the beginning?"[2] And in the fore-mentioned: "In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil; whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother?"[3] If all were like you, under what notion were we to unite with them? The apostle tells us,[4] "I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils. Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils; ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils." And in good earnest, incarnate devils—though that text do not directly speak of such—have too much of devil in them to be participants in a communion that can seem desirable, or is likely to be grateful, to serious Christians. I must avow it to all the world, it is not this or that external form I so

[1] 1 John iii. 12, 15. [2] John viii. 44. [3] 1 John iii. 10.
[4] 1 Cor. x. 20, 21.

much consider in the matter of Christian union and communion, as what spirit reigns in them with whom I would associate myself. How can I endure to approach those holy mysteries, wherein all are to drink into one spirit and declare their union with the God of love, with the "Immanuel," God most nearly approaching us, "God with us," collecting and gathering us in unto him as our common centre, whence the blessed Spirit of holy love is to diffuse itself through the whole body, all enlivened by that Spirit, and formed by it unto all kindness, benignity, goodness, and sweetness;—with what significancy can I do so, though I were never so well satisfied with the external forms and modes myself, if it be apparent (I say, if *apparent*) I must cast in my lot and join myself with them,—were they generally such,—whose souls are under the dominion of the quite contrary spirit, that fills them with malignity, with mischievous dispositions and purposes, towards many a sincere lover of God that cannot be satisfied with these forms and modes, and who decline them only from a sense of duty to God and a fear of offending against the high authority of their blessed, glorious Redeemer?

I know many are apt to justify themselves in their animosity and bitterness of spirit towards others, upon a pretence that they bear the same disaffected mind towards *them*. But besides that it is the most manifest and indefensible injustice, if they charge the innocent or such as they are not sure are guilty; if their own wrath and enmity be so potent in them as to enable their tainted, vicious imagination to create its object, or so to disguise and falsely clothe it, as to render it such to themselves as whereupon they may more plausibly pour out their fury:—I say, besides that, how contrary is this vindictive spirit to the rules and spirit of the Christian religion! Is this to "love our enemies, to bless them that curse us, and despitefully use us?" etc. How unlike the example of our blessed Lord, when, even in dying agonies, he breathed forth these words and his soul almost at once, "Father, forgive them," etc.; or of the holy martyr

Stephen, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge!" How unlike is that aptness to the retaliating of injuries, to the Christian temper which the renowned Calvin discovers in an epistle to Bullinger, speaking of Luther's severity towards him!—'If Luther a thousand times,' saith he, 'call me devil, I will acknowledge him for a famous servant of God;' which passage both Bishop Morton and Bishop Davenant magnify him for; and the former saith he herein spake so calmly, so placidly, so indulgently, as if it were not a man, but humanity itself that uttered the words.

Yea, and such retaliation is what paganism itself hath declaimed against.[1] A noted philosopher urges *that* against it that, one would think, should not need to be suggested to Christians,—somewhat so prudential as might not only work upon the principle of love to others, but even that of self-love;—that then the evil must perpetually circulate, and so must again and again return upon ourselves: as indeed if that must be the measure, to revile them that revile us, and render evil for evil, railing for railing, we should never have done.[2] It were a course which, once begun, could, by that rule, never find an end.

This then, is the first part of the answer to the proposed question: 'What may be most hopefully done,' etc. The endeavour of having our hearts knit together in love would surely do much towards it. And this is agreeable to any the most private capacity. No man can pretend his sphere is too narrow—if his soul be not—for the exercise of love towards fellow-Christians. And I hope it is agreeable to all our principles. Sure no man will say it is against his conscience to love his brother. And the same must be said of,—

II. That other expedient, the endeavour to have our souls possessed with a more clear, efficacious, practical faith of the gospel,—which was to make the other part of the answer to our question. And though this is the more important part, it is also so very evident, that we do not need to make this discourse swell to a bulk too unpropor-

[1] Maxim. Tyr. *Dissert.* ii.

[2] 1 Pet. ii. 23; iii. 9.

tionable to the rest it is to be joined with, by speaking largely to it.

Although we have not the name of faith in this text, we have the thing. It is not named, but it is described, so as that it may easily be understood, both what it is, and how necessary to our purpose :—

1. What it is, or what measure and degree of it, that would be of so great use in such a case, we are told with great emphasis; "The riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ:" such as whereby :—

Our understandings are duly enlightened, so as mentally to entertain aright the doctrine of the gospel; that is, first, distinctly to apprehend the meaning and design of this mysterious revelation of God in Christ; secondly, to be fully assured of the truth of it:

Such again, as whereby our hearts are overcome, so as practically and vitally to receive it; that is, to acknowledge, receive, resign, intrust, and subject ourselves unto God in Christ, revealed in it.

And of how vast importance this is towards our establishment, the confirming, fortifying, and uniting of our hearts, and our joint preservation in our Christian state,—the main thing we are to design and be solicitous for,—we may see in these particulars.

i. Hereby we should apprehend the things to be truly great wherein we are to unite. That union is not like to be firm and lasting, the centre whereof is a trifle. It must be somewhat that is of itself apt to attract, and hold our hearts strongly to it. To attempt with excessive earnestness a union in external formalities that have not a value and goodness in themselves, when the labour and difficulty is so great and the advantage so little, how hopeless and insignificant would it be! The mystery of God, even of the Father and of Christ, how potently and constantly attractive would it be, if aright understood and acknowledged! Here, we should understand, is our life and our all.

ii. Hereby we should in comparison, apprehend all things else to be little: and so our differences about little things would languish and vanish. We should not only know, but consider and feelingly apprehend, that we agree in far greater things than we differ in; and thence be more strongly inclined to hold together by the things wherein we agree than to contend with one another about the things wherein we differ.

iii. Hereby our religion would revive, and become a vital, powerful thing; and consequently more grateful to God, and awful to men. First,

More grateful to God; who is not pleased with the stench of carcasses or with the dead shows of religion, instead of the living substance. We should hereupon not be deserted of the Divine presence; which we cannot but reckon will retire, when we entertain him but with insipid formalities. What became of the Christian interest in the world, when Christians had so sensibly diverted from minding the great things of religion, to little, minute circumstances about which they affected to busy themselves, or to the pursuit of worldly advantages and delights? Secondly,

More awful to men. They who are tempted to despise the faint, languid appearances of an impotent, inefficacious, spiritless religion, discern a majesty in that which is visibly living, powerful, and productive of suitable fruits. Who that shall consider the state of the Christian church, and the gradual declining of religion for that three hundred years from Constantine's time to that of Phocas, but shall see cause at once to lament the sin and folly of men and adore the righteous severity of God? For as Christians grew gradually to be loose, wanton, sensual; and their leaders contentious, luxurious, covetous, proud, ambitious affecters of domination; so was the Christian church gradually forsaken of the Divine presence: inasmuch as that at the same time when Boniface obtained from Phocas the title of Universal Bishop, in defiance of the severe sentence of his predecessor, Gregory the Great, sprang up the dreadful delusion of

Mohammed ;[1] and so spread itself to this day, through Asia, Africa, and too considerable a part of Europe, that where Christians were twenty or thirty to one, there was now scarce one Christian to twenty or thirty Mohammedans or grosser pagans. And what between the Mohammedan infatuation and the popish tyranny, good Lord! what is Christendom become? when by the one the very name is lost, and by the other little else left but the name.

iv. Hereby we shall be enabled most resolvedly to suffer, being called to it, when it is for the great things of the gospel, the mystery of God and of the Father and of Christ, clearly and with assurance understood and acknowledged. Such a faith will not be without its pleasant relishes. It is an uncomfortable thing to suffer either for the mere spiritless, uncertain, unoperative notions and opinions or for the unenlivened outward forms of religion, that we never felt to do us good; in which we never tasted sweetness or felt power; that we were really nothing ever the better for. But who will hesitate at suffering for so great things as the substantials of the gospel, which he hath clearly understood, whereof he is fully assured, and which he hath practically acknowledged and embraced so as to feel the energy and power of them, and relish their delicious sweetness in his soul? And though by such suffering he himself perish from off this earth, his religion lives, is spread the more in the present age and propagated to after ages; so seminal and fruitful a thing is the blood of martyrs, as hath always been observed. And as such a faith of the mystery of the gospel appears to have this tendency to the best, firmest and most lasting union among Christians and the consequent preservation of the Christian interest, this mystery being more *generally* considered only; so this tendency of it would be more distinctly seen, if we should consider the more eminent and remarkable parts of it:—the mystery of the Redeemer's person, the Immanuel, God uniting himself with the nature of man; his office, as a reconciler of God and man to each

[1] Brerewood's *Inquiries*.

other; his death, as a propitiatory sacrifice to slay all enmity; his victory and conquest over it, wherein is founded his universal empire over all; his triumphant entrance into heaven, whither he is to collect all that ever loved, trusted, and obeyed him, to dwell and be conversant together in his eternal love and praises. How directly do all these tend to endear and bind the hearts and souls of Christians to God, and him, and one another, in everlasting bonds!

Thus then, we have the answer to our question in the two parts of the text: the former pointing out to us the subjects of our union, with the uniting principle by which they are to be combined with one another; the other the centre of it, with the uniting principle whereby they are all to be united in that centre.

Use.—And what now remains but that we lament the decay of these two principles, and to our uttermost endeavour the revival of them?

1. We have great cause to lament their decay; for how visible is it! and how destructive to the common truly Christian interest! It was once the usual cognizance of those of this holy profession, 'See how these Christians love one another, and even refuse not to die for each other!' Now it may be, 'How do they hate, and are like to die and perish by the hands of one another!' Our Lord himself gave it them to be their distinguishing character: "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another." Good Lord! what are they now to be known by?

And what a cloudy, wavering, uncertain, lank, spiritless thing, is the faith of Christians in this age become! How little are the ascertaining grounds of it understood, or endeavoured to be understood! Most content themselves to profess it only as the religion of their country, and which was delivered to them by their forefathers; and so are Christians but upon the same terms as other nations are Mohammedans, or more gross pagans, as a worthy writer some time since took notice.[1] How few make it their business to see things

[1] Pinke's *Trial of a Christian's Love to Christ.*

with their own eyes, to believe and be sure that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God! How far are we from "the riches of the full assurance of understanding!" How little practical and governing is the faith of the most! How little doth it import of an "acknowledgment of the mystery of God," namely, "of the Father and of Christ!" How little effectual is it,—which it can be but in proportion to the grounds upon which it rests. When the gospel is received, not as the word of man, but of God, it works effectually in them that so believe it.[1]

2. Let us endeavour the revival of these principles. This is that in reference whereto we need no human laws. We need not edicts of princes to be our warrant for this practice of loving one another and cleaving with a more grounded, lively faith to God and his Christ. Here is no place for scruple of conscience in this matter. And as to this mutual love, what if others will not do their parts to make it so? What! shall we only love them that love us, and be fair to them that are fair to us, salute them that salute us? "Do not even the publicans the same?" What then do we more than others? as was the just expostulation of our Saviour upon this supposition.[2]

And let us endeavour the more thorough deep radication of our faith, that it may be more lively and fruitful; which this apostle, you see,—not forgetting his scope and aim,—further presses in the following verses, testifying his joy for what he understood there was of it among these Christians: "Though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ."[3] And exhorting them to pursue the same course: "As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him; rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving."[4]

And what! also, must we suspend the exercise and improvement of our faith in the great mysteries of the gospel till all

[1] 1 Thess. ii. 13. [2] Matt. v. 47. [3] Col. ii. 5. [4] Col. ii. 6, 7.

others will agree upon the same thing? Let us do our own part, so as we may be able to say, 'Per me non stetit;'—'It was not my fault but Christians had been combined and entirely one with each other, but they had been more thoroughly Christian and more entirely united with God in Christ; that Christianity had been a more lively, powerful, awful, amiable thing. If the Christian community moulder, decay, be enfeebled, broken, dispirited, ruined in great part,—this ruin shall not rest under my hand.' We shall have abundant consolation in our own souls, if we can acquit ourselves as to these two things,—that we lamented the decay and loss, and endeavoured the restitution of them, and therein as much as in us was, of the Christian interest.

THE

CARNALITY OF RELIGIOUS CONTENTION:

IN TWO SERMONS,

PREACHED AT THE MERCHANTS' LECTURE, IN BROAD STREET.

THE PREFACE TO THE READERS.

This title nobody can think is meant to condemn all contention about matters of religion as carnal; but since there is too much which is apparently so, it only signifies it to be the design of the following discourse to show what contention that is; and when, or in what case, though it hath religion for its object, it may not have it for its principle, but that very frequently the lust of the flesh hides itself under that specious name; and to show wherein, while it affects to hide, yet unawares it discovers itself, in the management of affairs of that sacred kind. Thus it often really is; and then is that noble cause as ignobly served as when, according to that Father's observation,[1] a man proves to be unfaithful even for the faith, and sacrilegious for religion.

When in one place Christians are exhorted "to contend earnestly for the faith;"[2] and in another we are told, "the servant of the Lord must not strive;"[3] it is plain there is a contention for religion which is a duty, and there is a contention even concerning religion too, which is a sin. And that sin the apostle in this context, out of which our discourse arises, doth deservedly expose by the name of 'flesh,' and of the 'lust' or of the works thereof; such as 'wrath,' 'variance,' 'envy,' 'hatred,' etc.: whence it is easy to collect in what sense it is said in the mentioned place, the servant of the Lord must not strive; namely, as that striving excludes the 'gentleness,' the 'aptness to instruct,' and the 'patience,' which are in the same place enjoined, where that striving is forbidden. And from thence it is equally easy to collect, too, in what sense we ought to contend for the faith earnestly; that is, with all that earnestness which will consist with these, not with such as

[1] Cypr. *De Simplicit. Præl.* [2] Jude 3. [3] 2 Tim. ii. 24.

excludes them; as earnestly as you will, but with a sedate mind, full of charity, candour, kindness, and benignity towards them we strive with. We ought, we see in the mentioned place, "to be patient towards all men." Towards fellow-Christians there should certainly be a more peculiar brotherly-kindness.

The difference is very great, and most discernible in the effects, between the church's contentions against enemies without it and contentions within itself. The former unite it the more, increase its strength and vigour; the latter divide and enfeeble it. As to those of this latter kind, nothing is more evident or deserves to be more considered, than that as the Christian church hath grown more carnal, it hath grown more contentious; and as more contentious, still more and more carnal. The savour hath been lost of the great things of the gospel, which have less matter in them of dispute or doubt, but which only did afford proper nutriment to the life of godliness; and it hath diverted to lesser things, (or invented such as were otherwise none at all,) about which the contentious, disputative genius might employ, and wherewith it might entertain, feed, and satiate itself.

Thereby it hath grown strong and vigorous, and acquired the power to transform the church from a spiritual society, enlivened, acted, and governed by the Spirit of Christ, into a mere carnal thing, like the rest of the world. Carnality hath become, and long been in it, a governing principle, and hath torn it into God knows how many fragments and parties; each of which will now be the church, enclose itself within its own peculiar limits, exclusive of all the rest, claim and appropriate to itself the rights and privileges which belong to the Christian church in common, yea, and even Christ himself, as if *He* were to be so enclosed or confined; and hence is it said, 'Lo! here is Christ,' or 'There he is,' till he is scarce to be found anywhere, but as, through merciful indulgence, overlooking our sinful follies, he is pleased to afford some tokens of his presence both here and there. Yet also how manifest are the tokens of his displeasure and retirement! And how few will apprehend and consider the true cause!

I will now adventure to offer these things to serious consideration.

1. Whether for any party of Christians to make unto itself other limits of communion than Christ hath made, and hedge up

itself within those limits, excluding those whom Christ would admit, and admitting those whom he would exclude, be not in itself a real *sin?* When I say *make to itself*, this more peculiarly concerns those who form their own communions, having nothing herein imposed upon them by civil authority. Let others censure themselves as they see cause. They have a holy table among them, the symbol of their communion with one another in the Lord. I would ask 'Whose is this table? Is it the table of this or that man, or party of men? or is it the Lord's table?' Then certainly it ought to be free to his guests, and appropriate to them. And who should dare to invite others, or forbid these?

2. If it be a sin, is it not *a heinous one?* This will best be understood by considering what *his* limits are. Nothing seems plainer than that it was his mind, Christianity itself should measure the communion of Christians, as such: visible Christianity their visible communion. It will here then be inquired, as in all reason it should, what Christianity is? And if it be, every one will understand the inquiry concerning *that*, as they would concerning anything else; What is its essence, or what are its essentials, or wherein doth it consist,—not what are all the several accidents it may admit of: as you would do, if it were inquired, What is humanity? Now here it will be readily acknowledged, that Christianity (as all things else that are of moral consideration) must be estimated more principally by its end, and that its final reference is not to this world, but to the world to come, and to a happy state there; and that, considering the miserable state wherein it finds the souls of men here, and the greater misery they are hereafter liable to, it must design their present recovery, and finally, their eternal salvation: that in order hereto it must propound to men some things necessary to be believed, some things necessary to be done; and that both must intend the making of them good in order to the making them happy, or the saving of them from eternal misery: that both are sufficiently propounded by the kind and great author of this constitution, Christ himself, in his word or gospel: that this gospel, besides many incidental things, expressly represents some things as of absolute necessity to salvation, by which are settled the very terms of life and death unto sinners; and as a principal, most comprehensive, and most fundamental thing to all the rest, requires men's resigning and

subjecting themselves unto him, or putting themselves by solemn covenant into his hands or under his conduct, to be by him brought to God and made finally happy in Him.

Whatsoever, therefore, is of absolute necessity to this end, is essential to Christianity. Christians, then, are a sort of men tending to God and blessedness under the conduct of Christ, to whom they have by covenant devoted themselves, and to God in him. Visible Christians are such as are in this visible tendency,—with their children yet in minority, and not capable of making an understanding profession themselves. Such as have arrived to that capacity are no longer to be considered in their parents, but apart by themselves. They that have been sufficiently instructed in the principles of the Christian religion, that have devoted themselves to God in Christ, and live in their general course conformably to his holy rules, are visibly personal covenanters. It is plainly the mind of Christ, that those be received into that plenary communion which belongs to the Christian state, and particularly unto that sacred rite which is the communion of his body and blood, and wherein the new testament or covenant hath its solemn obligation, and wherein as 'fœderati,' or 'persons in covenant,' they have more express communion with him and one another.

They that are yet unacquainted with the most necessary things of Christian religion, are to be held as catechumens under instruction, if they be willing; they that live licentiously, in the state of penitents, till they give that proof of their serious repentance, as that their profession thereof appear not to be slight and ludicrous. They that refuse to learn or be reformed; that live in open hostility against the known laws of Christ, are not visible Christians, are not visibly in the way of salvation. Visible subjection and visible rebellion are inconsistencies. If, therefore, any society of men, professedly Christian, do make other limits of their communion,—admitting those that Christ's rule excludes, excluding them whom it would admit,—especially if the alteration be not only by the making those things necessary which he hath not revealed nor enjoined as necessary, but which he hath not revealed or enjoined at all, and so is not only to add to Christian religion taken at large, but even to its essentials; this is substantially to change the evangelical covenant, to make it another thing, to break Christ's constitution and set up another. If they be little

things only that we add, we must know there is 'nihil minimum' in religion. What, if as little as they are, many think them sinful, and are thereby thrown off from our communion? The less they are, the greater the sin to make them necessary; to hang so great things upon them, break the church's peace and unity by them, and of them to make a new gospel, new terms of life and death, a new way to heaven: and is as much as in us lies to make things of highest necessity depend not only upon things of no necessity, but that are, in our religion, perfect nullities, not having any place there at all; and thereupon is in effect to say, 'If you will not take Christianity with these additions of ours, you shall not be Christians; you shall have no Christian ordinances, no Christian worship; we will, as far as in us is, exclude you heaven itself, and all means of salvation.' And upon the same ground upon which they may be excluded one communion by such arbitrary, devised measures, they may be excluded another also, and be received nowhere. And if their measures differ, they all exclude one another; and hence so many churches,—so many Christendoms. If this be sinful, it is sin of the deepest dye: whereas the Holy Scriptures speak with such severity, as we know they do, of the altering of man's landmarks, what may we think of altering God's? And the sin is still the greater, if the things of highest necessity are overlooked in the meantime as trifles; tithing of mint is stood upon, but judgment, faith, mercy, and the love of God, passed over;[1] infidels poured in upon the church, wolves and bears under the name of sheep; and the lambs of Christ, which he requires to be fed, thrown out into the wilderness!

3. But if we suppose it a sin, and so heinous a one, *how far doth the guilt of it spread!* How few among the several sorts and parties of Christians are innocent, if the measures of their several communions were brought under just and severe examination! How few that lay their communions open to visible Christians as such, excluding none of whatsoever denomination, nor receiving any that by Christian, rational estimate cannot be judged such!

4. *How few that consider this as the provoking cause of Christ's being so much a stranger to the Christian church!* And how little is it to be hoped we shall ever see good days till this

[1] As Matt. xxiii. 23; Luke xi. 42.

wasting evil be redressed! or that our glorious Redeemer, who is head of all things to the church, should ever own it by visible favours, should protect, cherish, enlarge it, or make it spread in the world, (and how little it is *naturally* in any probability of doing so,) or that he should treat it as his, while it is so little itself, and so little one!

In the present most deplorable state of things, private,—that is, carnal,—interest is the thing everywhere designed by one party and another: and by wishing the prosperity of the church, or endeavouring it, is only meant seeking the prosperity of our own party, so that there can be no united prayers nor joint endeavours for any truly common good; but what seems desirable to some, is dreaded and deprecated by all the rest. Thus for thirteen or fourteen hundred years hath the church been gradually growing a multiform, mangled, shattered, and most deformed thing; broken and parcelled into nobody knows how many several sorts of communions. The measures whereof how strangely alien have they been from those which were genuine and primitive; that is, from substantial Christianity and the things that must concur to make up that;—instead of sound knowledge of the few clear and great things of religion, a great many doubtful opinions; the taking one side in a disputed point; the determination of a logical question; understanding, or saying one understands, (whether we do or no,) a metaphysical nicety; and sometimes professing to believe somewhat that Scripture never said, or shows itself never to have meant, and that is most manifestly contrary to all reason and common sense: instead of reverent, decent, grave worship,—affected, scenical, ludicrous formalities, uncouth gesticulations, disguised countenances, with I know not what empty shows of a forced and feigned devotion: which things also were to serve instead of orderly, unreprovable conversation, of serving God and of doing good to other men: and to expiate the crimes of a very bad one,—to make amends and atone for the lewdest, the most licentious, and most mischievous practices.

In sum, not only are things most alien from real Christianity added to it, but substituted in the room of it, and preferred before it: yea, and things most destructive of it indulged and magnified in opposition to it. This is too generally the state of the carnalized Christian church: and never were there more fervent contentions

among all sorts, *whose* notions, opinions, modes, and forms are to be preferred.

The word of God tells us that "to be carnally-minded is death." These contests seem, therefore, to express great solicitude how most neatly to adorn a carcass, or at best how with greatest art and curiosity to trim and apparel gorgeously a languishing man in the feared approaches of death, instead of endeavouring to save his life. But if any endeavour to that purpose were yet to be used, what should it be? That any man should go about to propose to the Christian church, were both presumptuous and hopeless. We can only speak our wishes to men, and offer them in solemn supplications to God. And it were a happy omen, if good men could once agree what in particular to pray for; it being out of question that such men would not be guilty of so much hypocrisy as to their uttermost not seriously to endeavour what they durst adventure, and thought it necessary, to make the subject of their prayers.

And one would think it should not be difficult to men of sincere minds, upon serious consideration of the present sad state of things, not only in general to pray for the true spiritual welfare of the church of Christ in the world, but so far to be particular, as to pray, in order thereto, that it may be more entirely one. We are told, "There is one body, and one Spirit." [1] That the Spirit is but one, we are sure is true in fact: and so we are that the body animated by that Spirit, as it is such, can be but one also. But the apostle's business in that place is not merely to assert such a union as there already was, but also to persuade to such a one as there yet was not,—that is, that it might be more entire and complete than hitherto it was; and that such a unity might be preserved in the bond of peace; and this in order to its growth to the measure of the stature of a perfect man in Christ,—implying plainly enough that the less it was *one*, the less it would grow: which also is sufficiently evident in itself. For it is first plain, in the nature of the thing, that by how much it is more divided and multiform, it will appear the less considerable in the world, and so be less apt to attract and draw in others. Yea, and its appearance and aspect will not only be less inviting and attractive, but it will be offensive, and create prejudices in the minds of men against

[1] Eph. iv. 4.

Christianity itself; which appears the plain meaning of that petition of our blessed Lord, when he was leaving the world: "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me:"[1] implying manifestly, that if they did not appear one, it would strongly tempt the world to infidelity. Whereupon all good men have a mighty inducement to unite in this request for more entire visible oneness in the Christian church, not only from the example of our Lord leading them in this request, but from the reason also by which he enforces it, that otherwise the rest of the world must be confirmed and obdured in their infidelity. Who sees not, therefore, that the Christian interest is naturally obstructed in its extensive growth by the visible disunion of the Christian community? for it can scarce admit to be called a society in its present torn and shattered state.

And again, its divisions being—as they cannot be other than—criminal, the effect of indulged carnality, and designed to serve the carnal interest of this or that party in opposition to the rest; they hereby not only offend and give scandal to the world,—who thereupon discern nothing of peculiar excellency in the Christian profession, when under it they see men driving but such low designs as they themselves more honestly do without any such veil,—but they offend the Spirit of Christ too, who thereupon in great degrees withdraws itself; not totally, which could not consist with the promise, "I am with you alway, unto the end of the world;"[2] but unto such degrees as shall testify displeasure. And hence is the growth of the church obstructed, not only naturally, but penally too: whence it is most evident, that they cannot with judgment pray for the spiritual welfare of the church of Christ, who pray not for its union; nor with sincerity, who to their utmost endeavour it not also. Nor can there be true seriousness in so much, but the consideration must ensue, What course is most likely to serve so desired an end? And since necessary things are most plain, and less liable to dispute and doubt; and it is matter of fact, obvious to every observing eye, that the disceptations and divisions in the Christian church, which are and have been from age to age, do for the most part arise from the addition of unnecessary things to it, which belong not to its constitution,

[1] John xvii. 21. [2] Matt. xxviii. 20.

and which, while some think lawful only, and at best but an ornament to it, others think sinful and a deformity ; it cannot hence but appear a thing much to be desired and endeavoured, that these occasions of offence and division might cease and be removed : which even they that think such additions to be for the matter of them lawful, might yet see reason enough to desire and to endeavour should be taken away ; yea, though they apprehend them of some use ; it being so manifest that the hurt which accrues by them is unspeakably more. And besides, one would think it should not be unapprehensible to any man that allows himself the free use of his thoughts, that though he should continue of the judgment that such additions were in the matter of them lawful, yet the making them additional terms of Christian communion must be highly sinful, as being the introduction of a new Christianity,—Christian communion being of Christians as such.

But this amputation is, according to the present posture of men's minds all the Christian world over, a thing equally to be desired and despaired of ; as a general union therefore is in the meantime. We cannot unite with them who insist upon terms of union that we judge unlawful in those things. For those, that insist upon terms that we think not simply unlawful, while yet they are different, in several Christian societies, we cannot therein unite with any but we must, for aught we know, divide from as many.

That only which the present state of things admits of is, that we keep ourselves united in mind and spirit with all serious Christians in the plain and necessary things wherein they all agree ; that we preserve in our own spirits a resolved unaddictedness to any party in the things wherein they differ ; that for actual and local communion, (which we cannot have with all the Christians in the world, and can have comparatively but with a few,) we join with them that come nearest us,—that is, that we judge come nearest to our common rule ; that, as some means hereto, we especially labour to centre in some such scheme of doctrinals as for which all these profess to have a common reverence ; that while our union cannot as yet be so extensive as it ought, it may be as extensive as we can ;—that the gospel be not hindered, and that our ministry may be the more successful and profitable

to the promoting of the common salvation among those that attend upon it.

Such schemes or collections of doctrines reduced into an order, as gold formed into a vessel, whereas truth as it lies in the Holy Scriptures is as gold in the mass, may be of use, as they have always been used in the church in all ages, more distinctly to inform others concerning our sentiments,—though the use is less that after thorough search and inquiry they can be of to one's self,—provided they be avowed to be looked upon but as a 'mensura mensurata,' reserving unto the Scriptures the honour of being the only 'mensura mensurans;' and so that we only own them as agreeable to the Scriptures: and again, that we declare we take them to be agreeable thereto in the main, or for substance, without attributing a sacredness to the very words of a mere human composition,—which indeed we cannot attribute to the words used in the translation of the Bible itself: and that for the things, we believe them with a degree of assent proportionable to their greater or less evidence.

This, through the blessing of God, such as have used a sincere and ingenuous freedom with one another, have found an effectual expedient to deliver their minds from mutual doubt concerning each other, that because of some different modes of expressing their sentiments they held very different opinions: which they have found to be a mistake on one hand and the other, and have given and received satisfaction. They intended nothing that ought to be reckoned into the account of Socinian, Pelagian, Popish, Arminian, or Antinomian errors;—that fraudulent and unjust way of making the estimate being justly exploded, that whosoever shall, in some things that touch not the main points of difference, say as some other of these do, must therefore be of their minds throughout: which rule of judging would make any Christian be taken for a Jew, a Mohammedan, or a pagan, there being no intelligent Christian but must say many things that they do. But it is to be hoped this engine of the devil's is by the mercy of God broken, so as that the people shall be no more frighted from attending to the ministry of such,—be their denomination what it will,—as use apt and proper methods to awaken, convince, and save souls, by being told they are Antinomians or Arminians, etc.: it being upon inquiry found, that persons so and so charged by the

rash folly of some that understand nothing of the difference besides the different sound of those odious names, do really detest the doctrines imputed to them.

And that furthermore, while we look upon an agreement therein as a sufficient character of one sound in the faith, we do not profess to reckon every one of the things therein contained, without distinguishing their importance, necessary to that purpose ; and do never intend our communion shall be limited by other bounds than only an agreement in those things for doctrinals, which we take to be of such importance and necessity as, without the belief whereof, a man cannot be a sincere Christian ; which certainly cannot but be a very few, less disputed things, among them that profess to believe the Divine authority of the Scriptures, and that will allow them to be interpreted according to the ordinary ways of interpreting other writings.

That for matters of practice in the worship of God, we be satisfied not to be obliged to do things which we think unlawful ourselves, without entertaining the least surmise but that many good men may judge some things lawful that we do not, and may practise accordingly : that we always keep ourselves in a prepared temper of spirit to receive further information about doubtful things : that we cherish in our souls a universal sincere love to Christians as such, and to men as men ; that we studiously endeavour in our several stations the doing the most general good we can : and that our whole design do terminate upon what, so far as we can succeed in it, must be acknowledged by all good men to be a real service to the church of Christ,—by gathering into it as many as we can, considering it as made up of persons that, with judgment and in practice, own the very substance of Christian religion. With such dispositions of mind as these, we shall, in this divided state of the Christian church, be innocent of the sinful evil of its divisions, and keep, as much as in us is, the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

And do we yet entertain in our minds any hope that the Christian religion shall spread and be more generally propagated through the world ? or do we desire it should ? or do we dread that it should not, through our default ? Let us, then, look back to the years of ancient time, and consider what it was when it grew and increased mightily ; when, without other advantages

than its own self-recommending excellency, it everywhere made its own way,—subdued nations, proselyted enemies, defied the most fervent oppositions and persecutions; when the professors and preachers of it triumphed over martyrdoms, the fierceness and fury of wild beasts and flames, overcame by the blood of Jesus and the word of his testimony, not loving their lives unto the death; when, as Pliny,[1] writing to Trajan in favour of the Christians, intimates to him they were everywhere so increased both in cities and countries, that the pagan temples had lain almost quite desolate, and that there scarce had been any to buy of their sacrifices; when, about a hundred years after, Tertullian representing, in apology for them, their peaceableness, and how easy it were otherwise to them to relieve themselves of their sufferings, says they were become so numerous in the empire,[2] that if it were possible to them to withdraw themselves into some remote, obscure place, they who were left would even tremble at their own solitude.

Christianity was then all life and spirit; the Christian church in those days flourished in purity, power, and vigour: but when for the space of about three hundred years together, it had enjoyed the protection and benignity of Christian emperors, and was hereby become wanton, lost in carnality, not content with itself and its own native comeliness, but affected to shine in a borrowed lustre and ornature; when, as harlots are wont, it began to paint, to be fond of gay attire, and devise things for deckings to itself most alien from its original state and constitution, and which afterwards became the matter of bloody contentions and cruelties; when it grew ambitious of secular pomp, splendour, grandeur, and power;—then was it so far forsaken of God and his Spirit, that within a very few years after Boniface the Third had obtained of the Emperor Phocas the title of Universal Bishop, whereby popish tyranny and superstition became more *fully regnant* in the church, —that is, within less than twenty years,—began the senseless delusion of Mohammedanism to spring up without the church, and, assisted by the incredible accession of force and arms, came at length to prevail against it, (now gradually sinking more and more into vice and ignorance,) unto that degree, that in process of time what Christianity had gained from paganism it lost in a great

[1] Plin. *Epist.* [2] *Apol. contra Gent.*

measure unto Mohammedanism;[1] so that in several parts of Christendom, where were reckoned thirty Christians for one pagan, there came to be thirty Mohammedans for one Christian. And how next to unchristian the Christian world is in the nearer countries, very generally Protestant as well as Popish, is too well known; and in the remoter, divers writers inform us.[2]

Let it now, therefore, be considered for how many sad centuries of years Christianity hath been at an amazing stand,—got no ground upon the whole, but rather lost much. Is this the religion which so early, by its own native light and power, conquered so many nations, and which we expect to be the religion of the world? Who that understands this, would not, with deepest concern and anxiety of spirit, inquire into the cause? And what cause can be so obvious to our inquiry as a luxurious and a contentious carnality, which both go together, and which have enfeebled, dispirited, and lost its self-diffusing life and strength? What we cannot remedy, let us at least see and lament.

And let us supplicate more earnestly for the effusions of that Holy Spirit, which alone can give remedy to our distempers, and overcome the lusts of the flesh, of whatsoever kind, and restore Christian religion to itself, and make the Christian name great in the world. For can it content us that Christianity should appear, and be counted a mean, a weak, and even a ludicrous thing? that the Son of God should have descended and come down into our world, have put on man, have died upon a cross; have ascended, that he might fill all things, diffuse spirit, light, and life, through the world; have appointed prophets, apostles, pastors, and teachers, for the publishing his everlasting gospel; and at length leave men, even where the Christian name and profession doth obtain, no better men generally than he found them? distinguished only from the rest of the world by certain peculiar notions and by some different rites of worship; otherwise, as flagitious, as sensual, as impious towards God, as full of wrath, hatred, malice, and mischievous design towards one another, as any Pagans or Infidels ever were? and yet that they should expect to be saved, only because they are called Christian? What a representation of Christian religion is this!

[1] See in Brerewood's *Inquiries*.

[2] Ludolphus, *Æthiop. Hist.*, and divers others.

And thus it will be reckoned of, till it come to be understood more generally, and more openly avowed, that Christianity is not only a system of doctrines,—and those reducible within a little compass,—but of precepts also; not concerning the modes of worship only, but men's ordinary practice; and that not only respect their external actions, but which are designed to regulate and reform their minds and spirits, and do lay their first obligation there,—must subdue their inordinate appetites and passions, render them holy and harmless, the sons of God, shining as lights, holding forth the word of life, etc.; [1] the whole frame of the Christian institution being animated by the Divine Spirit, into whose name we are baptized, as well as into that of the Father and the Son, and which will be given where he is sought for, and not affronted.

Let this be taken for Christianity, and avowed to be so, and seriously endeavoured to be propagated as such, and it will not always be put to vie but as upon equal terms, with Mohammedanism, Judaism, Paganism, mere Deism, or whatsoever else shall exalt itself into a competition with it. And let whatsoever comes not within this compass, or is not truly and primitively Christian, be reseeted and cut off from it; and so it will appear an entire self-agreeable thing, and the Christian church be but one.

While it is not so, it will be the business and design of the most, only to promote the interest of this or that party; and if their sense were put into plain words, this it would be: 'I am for my church, or the church whereof I am, whatever becomes of the church of Christ.'

And so will a zealous endeavour for so narrow an interest as that of a divided party engage and engross all the intention of their minds, and their religion be summed up in contention, and such only as hath its root in that division which, on the one side at least and in great part too probably on both sides, chiefly proceeds from mere carnality. And what is it but religious contention, for the most part, that hath filled the Christian world with blood and ruins for many by-past ages? Carnal contention, under this most *specious pretence*, as being conversant about spiritual or religious concernments, is the thing animadverted on,—though in gentler instances, as later occasions did require,—in the following

[1] Phil. ii. 15, 16.

sermons. It was little imagined when they were delivered from the pulpit, they should ever have been made more public.

I have in this publication of them partly yielded to the opinion of divers, who judged they might possibly be useful to more than those who heard them, and to them further upon review ; but have more complied with a sort of necessity laid upon me by being told if they were not published by me, the thing would be done as it could, from broken, mistaken notes, without me. My own memorials and preparations were indeed imperfect enough, as it cannot but be in the case of one so often in the week engaged in such work. I have, as I could, by my own recollection, and by such help as I have otherwise had, endeavoured a full account of what was spoken ; and am very confident nothing material is omitted. Some ingeminations, or varied expressions of the same thing, that are pardonable, if not useful to a hearer, but not so grateful and less needful to a reader, I reckon not such. But divers passages, though not distinct heads, that were intended, but through want of time omitted, I have inserted in the places to which they did belong ; wherein none can think there is any wrong done. I am sensible the introductive part should have been, in some respects, otherwise methodized ; but I am content to let it go as it is, though I find by the notes that were brought me that some things were somewhat transposed, otherwise than was intended, in the delivery, from a memory not the most faithful.

If it do any good, it must be from the supply of the good Spirit of God ; which I admonish all you that read seriously to seek and ask from Him who hath promised thereupon it shall be given : the very expectation whereof will prevent reading with a vain mind or ill design, and the consequent danger of receiving hurt by what you read.

Yours in our common Lord,

JOHN HOWE.

THE CARNALITY OF RELIGIOUS CONTENTION.

SERMON I.

GALATIANS v. 16.

"THIS I SAY THEN, WALK IN THE SPIRIT, AND YE SHALL NOT FULFIL THE LUST OF THE FLESH."

THE last time I spake to you from these words, having largely opened before the import of 'walking in the Spirit,' I undertook to show you how 'the flesh' here is to be understood; against the lusts whereof such 'walking in the Spirit' is the prescribed remedy. In the general, you have been told that 'flesh' is here to be taken morally, and in that latitude as to signify all sorts of moral evil, or the general depravedness of our corrupt nature: for though sometimes in the moral acceptation, the sense is limited, as hath formerly been showed, to grosser sins, in contradistinction to more refined,[1] yet sometimes also it is so far extended as to signify all sins.[2] And in this context it is plain the apostle comprehends sins of both these sorts under this one expression.

But what particular evils he more especially intended here to censure and caution these Galatian Christians against under this one name, cannot better be understood than by consulting this context itself; in which, though we cannot say we have a full enumeration, we have yet very many

[1] As 2 Cor. vii. 1, and 1 John ii. 16.

[2] As Col. ii. 11, compared with Rom. vi. 6.

instances of the carnalities against which this remedy is directed: some of them more gross,—as we have told you they might be distinguished,—"adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, murder, drunkenness, revellings;" and some other that may seem more refined, not as having less, but only a more subtle, malignity in them; such as "hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings," etc. It may here be thought strange that such sins as these should be animadverted upon in Christian churches,—as this epistle is inscribed to such, "The churches of Galatia,"[1]—so soon after the gospel was come among them. The apostle himself thought it strange; for you find him wondering at it:[2] "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel:" yea, and after that, with the gospel, they had received the Spirit too; for it is said, "This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" and, "Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, do ye think to be made perfect by the flesh?"[3]

We are therefore to consider what sort of persons and doctrines they were that had corrupted and depraved those churches; and whereby it will be the more apprehensible by what kind of insinuations they so far prevailed. And we may collect in very great part what they were, from divers passages of this epistle itself; and indeed from this very context. Some would have us think the persons were of that sect called Gnostics, from their pretended and highly-boasted knowledge. We have no evidence that this sect was so early known by this name; but it is very likely they were that sort of men that were afterwards so called. The characters here given them in this and the other apostolical epistles do much agree with what divers of the more ancient Christian writers, and one pagan one,[4] say of that sect: which pagan, an interpreter and great admirer of his[5] would

[1] Chap. i. 2. [2] Chap. i. 6. [3] Chap. iii. 2, 3. [4] Plotinus.
[5] Marsil. Ficinus.

fain have pass for a Christian, because, living in a time when the controversy between Christianity and paganism was at the height, he says nothing against Christianity itself, but speaks very much against these pseudo-Christians; whom, though that author mentions not by that name, this his interpreter often doth it for him,—inserting 'The Gnostics,' even when he is but translating, into the body of the work itself.

But this less concerns us. It is, however, out of question, that this sort of men, very anciently called Gnostics, did highly vaunt their great knowledge: a very tempting, specious pretence; though their sublimer notions, about the Æons, etc., were imaginations only; fancy, and not knowledge; or γνῶσις ψευδώνυμος—'knowledge misnamed,' or 'falsely so called,' (as we may borrow the apostle's expression,[1] though those inventions were later,) and could only serve to fill the minds of their proselytes with wind and vanity.

But their doctrines upon which the apostle animadverts in this epistle, we may collect from the manifest scope and design of it; and that was, to assert *justification by faith without the works of the law*, which they greatly perverted; and *sanctification by the Spirit of Christ*, or the doctrine of the *new creature*, which they even quite subverted. With which false doctrines they conjoined a most impurely vicious life and practice; falling in much with the Jews in their corrupt doctrines, and with the pagans in their licentious practice;—which must be equally tempting to carnal minds.

And this may make it appear less strange that all these sorts of carnality that are here mentioned in this context,[2] should, in reference to the same sort of men, be so put together. For it is evident they were partly a Judaizing and partly a paganizing sort of Christians; as, for ends of their own, they affected to call themselves. They held it lawful for Christians to join with pagans in their solemnities of worship, which they were wont to celebrate in the temples of their idols. It is notorious how gross impurities and immo-

[1] 1 Tim. vi. 20.

[2] From ver. 15 to ver. 21.

ralities were in those days incorporated into the paganish worship; such as made it sufficiently reasonable that idolatry should have in conjunction with it fornication and adultery, uncleanness and lasciviousness. And for the addition of witchcraft, it was not unaccountable; there being also sorceries, magical rites, and diabolical incantations, observed to have been intermingled with the *sacra* of the pagans: and for which these misnamed Christians might have the greater kindness also, for the sake of Simon Magus, the father of their sect, by whom the affectation thereof was transmitted to some of his noted followers, that thought it a glorious thing to vie with their predecessor in this sort of excellency.

Nor is it alien from this purpose to take notice that those diabolical rites are said to have obtained among the paganish idolaters,—of drinking the warm blood of their sacrifices and of eating things strangled with the blood in them,—upon the imagination that in their so doing they did partake of the very spirit of their gods whom they worshipped. And it is not altogether unsupposable that the devil might, in some unusual manner, enter into them at those times, more violently agitating their blood and other humours; in the higher ferments whereof, if by the directer influence of the great enemy of mankind quarrels and murders, as was not unlikely, should also sometimes ensue, it could not but heighten the sport and triumphs of hell. And that the decree of the apostles and elders[1] might have such a reference, prohibiting these things conjunctly, idolatry and fornication, and things strangled and blood, that they should by no means mingle with the pagans in these horrid rites,—a learned modern writer of our own hath rendered very probable.[2] And hereto those vehement dehortations of the apostle must answerably be understood to refer,[3] remonstrating to them that they could not have fellowship with the Lord's table and the table of devils: "And I would not," says he, "that ye should have fellowship with devils." For though he did not judge it unlawful to eat of the *idolothyta*,—that is, things

[1] Acts xv. [2] Dr. Spencer, *De Ritibus Hebræorum*. [3] 1 Cor. x. 7—21.

offered to idols,—being sold in the shambles, he yet most earnestly protests against their presuming to mingle and partake in the horrid diabolical rites and impure practices that were wont to be used at their festivals in the idols' temples.

All thoughts of being by their Christianity obliged and enabled unto strict purity and holiness of heart and life, were out of doors with these seducers, and endeavoured to be extinguished in such as they could work to a compliance with them; whereof the apostle seemed deeply apprehensive, when he so earnestly inculcates that "in Christ Jesus," or in the Christian state, "neither circumcision nor uncircumcision" were of any avail, but "a new creature," and "faith working by love."

But it must seem of all things the most unaccountable and incongruous, that men of so profligate sentiments and practices should be for introducing a justification by the works of the law, in opposition to that by the faith of Christ. It is manifest they hated the holy design of Christian religion which they professed; and professed it, that they might have better opportunity to undermine it. Hereupon, not opening at once all the *arcana* of their way, they carry answerably to persons and occasions as they occurred; and as the apostle was all things to all, that he might save some, so were they, that they might pervert and destroy;—to the Christian Jews one thing, to the Christian Gentiles another. In this their doctrine they did most plausibly Judaize, in their impure practices they verged more to paganism; pretending, to Christian converts from among them, that Christ never intended to tie them to strict severities or hold them under an uneasy bondage; whereto the apostle seems to refer:[1] "Ye have been called," he grants, "unto liberty; only use not," saith he, your "liberty for an occasion to the flesh." Thus we must suppose that they differently applied themselves to such as they designed to make their proselytes, endeavouring to accommodate themselves in the one of these

[1] Galatians v. 13.

to one sort of men, and to another sort in the other. In dealing with the Jewish Christians, they not only denied the doctrine of justification by faith, opposing thereto that of justification by the works of the law, but calumniated it too, as if it tended to infer a liberty to sin and make Christianity subservient to wickedness; whereof they knew their own to be more guilty: a piece of monstrous impudence, (but usual with men of such foreheads,) to endeavour the averting that charge from themselves to which they were most manifestly liable, by first charging it on the innocent.

Hereto the apostle hath manifest reference, when, having first asserted against them justification by faith only,[1]—"Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified,"—he then vindicates the assertion against their imputation, that it made Christ a patron to men's sins. "If," saith he, "while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid. For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. I am crucified with Christ," and am, in and with him, dead unto all sin, so as not to be under the dominion of any; and death never more had dominion over him, when he had once died. And whereas they, thus objecting against the doctrine of justification by faith in Christ, that it ministered unto sin, or made Christ a minister thereunto, were liable to have the objection retorted upon them, being a sort of men themselves so very infamously wicked; for this they had a double *salvo*, both of which the apostle doth industriously refute: that is, from the two parts of the law given by Moses, and the two sorts of the works of the law enjoined thereby,—that is, the moral and the ritual or ceremonial part. In reference to the former, they fall in

[1] Galatians ii. 16.

with those Jewish conceits of the merit of their good works done from the principle of free-will; and that in order to their justification, this merit was to be measured by the preponderation of their good works to their bad,[1] and that it was possible that one good work in some cases might turn the scale,—that is, if they were equal before. Now this the apostle occurs to, by showing that they that were under the law were under a curse: for that if they continued not in all things written in the law to do them, all they did was nothing; as you may see, chap. iii. of this epistle, verse 10.

And then, as to the ritual or ceremonial part; because their sacrifices were in great part expiatory of sin, and divers of their other performances carried a great show of sanctity and piety in them,—which their expiatory sacrifices could only be as they were representative of the one propitiation, and their other observances were nothing to their sanctity, if the thing they were designed to signify did not accompany the sign,—they imagined they were not to signify its presence, but to supply its absence. This notion did obtain even with the stricter sort of them, the Pharisees themselves; who thereupon made very light of the weightier matters of the law, reckoning that though they were guilty of many immoralities in practice, their exact observance of the rites and ceremonies enjoined by Moses would go far to make an amends; and that their paying tithe of mint, anise, and cummin, would serve instead of judgment, faith, mercy, and the love of God, which they are said to pass over as very light and small matters.[2] And herein the apostle contests with these Galatian Christians, not only with vehemency, but with some kind of wonder, that when gospel light had come among them, and that having known God, or rather been known of him,[3] they should attribute anything to so beggarly rudiments as these were; that is, being "circumcised," and "keeping days and months and years," etc., the things whereon they laid so great stress. And because they did so, he tells them, in that fourth

[1] See at large to this purpose Smith's Select Discourses upon this subject.
[2] See Matt. xxiii. 23, compared with Luke xi. 42. [3] As chap iv. 9.

chapter, that he was afraid that he had bestowed labour in vain among them.

In sum therefore, he makes it his business to evidence to them that both their justification and their sanctification must be conjoined, and arise together out of one and the same root,—Christ himself,—and by faith in him, without the works of the law; as that which must vitally unite them with him; and that thereby they should become actually interested in all his fulness:—that fulness of righteousness which was to be found only in him, and nowhere but in him; and withal, in that fulness of spirit and life, and holy influence, which also was only in him; so as that the soul, being united by this faith with Christ, must presently die to sin and live to God.[1] And at the same time, when He delivered a man from the law as dead to it, he became to him a continual living spring of all the duty which God did by his holy rule require and call for, and render the whole life of such a man a life of devotedness to God.

And it is here by the way worth the while to observe how the apostle himself expounds that phrase of being dead to the law, by being delivered from it.[2] And no man can be said to be delivered from anything as it is a good or an advantage to him, but as it is an evil and doth him hurt: and the law hurts no man as a rule of life. But as to one stated under the full power of it, it is a bar against that great blessing of the Spirit;[3] which by its yet abiding curse it keeps off from him, hereby occasioning his continuance in sin and then condemning him for it. Whereupon, how clear is the current of the discourse in these words; namely, "By the law I am dead to the law, that I might live to God; I am crucified with Christ, yet I live;" as much as to say, 'The law itself hath slain me, and killed all my hopes and expectations from it: the same law that slew Christ, hath slain me; I am crucified with him;' which supposes his being in him by that faith by which he was to live ever after. In this faith stood his marriage to Christ, who succeeds into the

[1] Gal. ii. 19, 20. [2] Rom. vii. 1–6. [3] Gal. iii. 13, 14.

room of the law, as the case is stated.[1] They that were settled, in reference to each other, in the conjugal state, as the law and the sinner were,—upon the death of the one, whichsoever it be, the relation ceases, and so the obligation which depended upon that relation. And thereupon, says he, 'The law itself having given me my death's wound, and killed me as to it, in the article of dying I join myself to Christ, and yield to be crucified with him, but therein acquire with him a new life.' "Nevertheless I live." And how? "Not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."—'And this life I now thus live, is a life of pure and absolute devotedness to God; terminated upon his interest and glory as the *end* of it; governed by his declared will as the *rule* of it:' that is, in sum, it is a holy life, or, as before, it is a living to God. Whereupon he so copiously distinguishes[2] between Jews and Jews,—those that were born after the flesh, and those born of the Spirit,—the sons of the bond-woman, and of the free, as he allegorically speaks; signifying the latter only born into this new state of life. By all which he shows the connexion to be most necessary and inviolable between being justified by faith in Christ and a life of holiness; so little opposite were these to one another, that one and the same faith was to infer both.

But now that the large extent of this holiness of life might more fully appear, the apostle signifies that it must not only exclude those grosser lusts and works of the flesh, but also such as, because they might seem somewhat more refined, might be reckoned by some less criminal; he therefore inserts divers of this other kind also. And the state of the case did equally require it: for it appears, as it might well be supposed, that, so far as any were tainted with the false notions and with inclinations to the impure practices before mentioned, they were filled with animosities, with wrath, envyings, and hatred, towards them that had not received the taint; and they might have too much place with these

[1] Rom. vii. 1—3, etc. [2] Gal. iv.

back again towards them. Whereupon there could not but be very great and high ferments in these churches. Nothing, therefore, could be more requisite or seasonable than that several instances of this sort of carnality should be put into this catalogue, namely, "hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife," etc.; for they were not to be thought, as was said, more refined, as having less, but a more subtle energy or penetrative power of malignity in them. Nor, indeed, hath Christianity and the Christian church suffered more by any sort of evils than by those of this sort. Others destroy particular persons; these, besides their doing so, do more directly hurt the community, and tend to waste and destroy the church.

Now as to those grosser carnalities mentioned in this context, I did formerly say somewhat briefly; and so I did as to that which seems the central one among those of this latter sort, namely, that of heresy; which I considered according to what it doth import in *itself*, and did design also to consider it in this its concomitancy, namely, of the things here mentioned in so near conjunction, and that are of nearer affinity with it,—hatred, envyings, and the like. I have, indeed, been since in some suspense whether I should pursue that intention or no; but upon serious consideration and solemn looking up to Heaven for direction, I have determined not to let this sort of carnality pass without just animadversion: for I consider that I speak to a Christian assembly, who must be understood all to profess equal and impartial reverence to the word of God, as to a revelation come down from heaven for our direction and conduct thither; and therefore none dare, upon serious thoughts, allow in themselves any kind of regret or disgust as to so material and important a part of this holy word. We are assured the words of God will do good to them that walk uprightly,—that is, to upright-hearted ones; who it must therefore be supposed will walk or deal uprightly in their attendance thereunto. And I cannot but hope that God will graciously help us to speak and hear with that uprightness

and integrity of heart, that this word of his may do good to some, without doing hurt to any.

In speaking therefore to this sort of carnality,—for we must mention it by such a term as the Holy Ghost hath thought fit to be put upon it,—I shall first, note to you some previous things more generally; then shall secondly, let you see what appearances there may be of it in such a case as the apostle's present discourse hath reference unto.

I. It will be of use to us more generally to note these few things.

1. That the several expressions of it which we find in this context in closer connexion with heresy, as it were guarding it before and behind,—namely, "hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, envyings,"—do all note but one radical evil and do all agree in one root: whereupon it will be the less needful to insist upon them severally, or to give you the criticism of each word by itself; which it were a great deal more easy to do, than it will be useful or of any avail to us. What I shall say, therefore, will be more general; but will, however, give you the occasion of casting your eye upon the particulars, whereby you will have the more distinct account of that carnality which is here referred to by the apostle.

2. This is needful to be noted, too, that this precept of the apostle, considered as a prescription against fulfilling the lusts of the flesh, has more immediate and direct reference to this sort of carnality. This is plain, if you will but again peruse the words as they lie in their closest connexion. For when he had said in the 14th verse, that "all the law is fulfilled in this one word, even in this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," (most of all, no doubt, one's Christian neighbour,) he adds, "But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another." Then immediately come in the words of the text, "This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh;"—as much as to say, 'The lust of the flesh will be working this way, putting you upon biting and devouring one

another. According as sentiments begin to differ and minds are divided, inclinations will carry one this way, and another that; and then you will be too prone to be at biting, and be ready to fall to devouring one another. Now, I have no better remedy to prescribe you against both than this, "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh." I should have been a very unfaithful interpreter of this context to you, if I had not taken notice of this so immediate connexion.

3. This is further to be noted, that this sort of carnality that lies in strifes, in emulations, in envyings, in hatred, etc., may come to have its occasion of being exercised, of working, lusting, and exerting itself, about the doctrines of the gospel; than which nothing is more evident, in that you find that these things are put in connexion with heresies, which must be understood to be a corruption of gospel doctrine. Very true, indeed, it is, that that word 'heresy,' among the more ancient philosophers, was used in a more gentle, and no way infamous sense, signifying only this or that sect of philosophers. But the word coming to be borrowed and transferred by sacred writers into the Holy Scriptures, there it is mostly taken in a very ill sense,—though not always,—as signifying error or corruption in doctrine of a very high and destructive nature.[1] For though all heresy be error, or carry error in it, yet all error is not heresy; *that* must be such error as strikes at the root, and is conjunct with heart disaffection and malignity, (as was noted the last time,) standing in opposition to faith, which is not a merely mental thing, but lies very principally in the heart. Doctrinal matters are however here referred unto, even in the very notion of heresy; and therefore about those matters these carnalities may have place. For when the several passions here mentioned are raised and do tumultuate in the breasts of this and that particular person, they soon and easily spread and propagate themselves to others, so as to infect the community. And then it comes to the forming of it into parties,

[1] As Tit. iii. 10, 11; 2 Pet. ii. 1.

or dividing it into two sides, as the word διχοστασίαι, (which we translate 'seditions,') signifies; the one stated and posited as in a hostile posture against the other, till at length the matter arrive to that height and pitch of contumacious and fixed obstinacy, as, in matters so important as the apostle's discourse reflects upon, will complete the notion of heresies, namely, on one side at least; not, perhaps, without great faultiness on the other, which comes next to be noted.

4. As such carnality may have place and exercise about gospel doctrine, so it is very possible it may show itself on both sides, even on their part who have the *truth* with them, as well as on theirs who oppose it, and make it their business to propagate the contrary error or false doctrine. The very defence of truth itself may be accompanied with such carnalities, such strife, wrath, malice, envy, as divides the guilt between the divided parties, and leaves neither side innocent.

I am, you know, by mere providence, in the series and track of a discourse long continued upon this context, led to say what I now do; and I have therefore the more hope that through the blessing of God it may be of some use to us. But this comes most directly under our notice; and let it be noted, that, whereas in such contests both sides are wont to be confident they are in the right, neither the one nor the other may be over-confident or careless of not being in the wrong in what may be of equal or greater importance than the matters themselves,—disputed among them that agree in the substantials of religion, or that "hold the Head,"—can be. Let us, I say, deeply consider it, that such sinful carnality may have place and exercise not only about religious concernments, but even on that side where the truth lies; which is from hence evident that the apostle immediately before the text, as I have noted, says, "If ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another." A great aptitude he therefore observed there was to be biting on both sides, even where the truth lay, and where it lay not.

For we are here further to observe, that whereas our apostle sadly considered that many among these Christians of

Galatia were lapsed and fallen from the purity and sincerity of religion; he apprehended, too, that they who were not so fallen took not the best course for the recovery of them that were: which that admonition of his must mean,[1] "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." It seems he reckoned that the sounder part among them, and that *ought*, and it is like thought themselves, to be more spiritual,—while they showed not more of a spirit of meekness towards the lapsed, were not so spiritual as they should be, and discovered more carnality than became them; more wrath and bitterness of spirit than could comport with the law of Christ. They will be little awed by this, and be apt for all this to indulge their own furious passions, that think He hath *no* law. But though one were never so sure he hath the truth on his side, it is in itself a dreadful thing to whomsoever shall allow himself the liberty seriously to think of it. For what must we conceive of such truth, that is to be defended in some cases; I say, that in some cases ought to be so? We must surely conceive of it as a divine, a sacred thing, a heaven-born thing, a thing of heavenly descent, part of a revelation immediately come forth from the very bosom of God: so is the whole gospel revelation to be looked upon. Now here is carnality that 'lusts;' such a kind of carnality as the context speaks of,—wrath, strife, hatred, etc. Here is such carnality lusting, actually lusting, seeking prey, ravening for food. And what doth it feed upon? No meaner thing than divine truth, evangelical doctrines! Monstrous thought! Consider I beseech you, my friends, what this comes to; the feeding an impure lust upon sacred things, or upon that which is divine! 'I must have my lust satisfied,' says the proud, contentious spirit. Wrath burns, anger boils; sacred things are not spared, but fallen upon, as the prepared food of lust! It will be fed,—they are not forborne. All reverence of God is forgotten,

[1] Galatians vi. 1, 2.

heaven is ravaged, the most sacred mysteries of God's own kingdom are violated, and torn this way and that—O horrid thing!—by harpies, vultures, by most fierce and furious lusts. And if a man would know, recognise, take knowledge of the most deeply inward sensations and intention of his own heart, thus it is,—'I must now apply my thoughts, bend my mind, to consider a revelation come from heaven. What! for the end for which it was given? to enlighten, purify, quicken my soul towards God, renew and form it for God, to serve and enjoy him? No; but on purpose to feed, to gratify a lust!' We can too often make neither better nor worse of it, but just so it is.

II. These things being premised, I would now go on a little more particularly to show you, wherein carnality may appear exerting itself, even about such things; or what will be manifest indications of such a carnality as is here referred unto, acting about or in reference to the things of God,—the most sacred and important truths and doctrines of his gospel.

1. When in comparison of some less things, wherein we find occasion or pretence to differ, little account is made of the incomparably greater things, wherein all serious Christians are agreed, and wherein they really cannot but be agreed. Let it be considered whether *pains* be not taken to devise some matter or other to contend about;—*that* shows a great disposition; and then, having found out some minuter things about which to differ, our differences, as little as they are, quite swallow up our agreements. The whole gospel signifies nothing, though full of the most glorious wonders, in comparison of some punctilios, either that we have invented, or that it may be doubted whether there be anything in them or nothing. Here is some mystery in all this! A lust is to be gratified;—an *appetite* to contend. This winds and wriggles this way and that, loath to appear but under some specious disguise of zeal for truth, indignation against false doctrine, or the like. But it bewrays itself, and unawares shows its ugly, serpentine head. For if the thing chosen out

to be the matter of contest be thought worth so much, when it is manifestly either in comparison little, or nothing but a figment, why are not the things on all hands most confessedly great and most evident, more highly esteemed, loved, relished, and with gust and delight fed upon? Why do not the greater things signify more to unite us in love and communion with all that agree with us in them, than the lesser things to divide us, about which we disagree? Indeed, the disagreements were in themselves vastly great between the untainted Christians of these Galatian churches, and that horrid sect the apostle's discourse has manifest reference unto. Blessed be God there are not such disagreements amongst us! But while there is less taint of error in our minds as to these things, are we not concerned to take heed there be not as great a taint of this vicious carnality in our hearts? It speaks too much of it, when, having devised a difference, we are prone to overlook and make little account of the great things wherein we are entirely and most professedly agreed.

If we consider the things which the doctrinal part of this epistle doth more expressly refer to, as I have noted already, how great things in reference hereto are we fully agreed in! We are all agreed that a sinner—an apostate, lapsed creature—can never be saved and brought to a blessed state, but he must be justified and he must be sanctified. He must be justified, to make his state safe; he must be sanctified, to make the temper of his spirit good, capable of communion with God in this world, and of final eternal blessedness with him in the other. We are agreed that such justification and such sanctification are both the effects of most absolutely free and sovereign grace; that none could be ever justified but by freest grace; that none can ever be sanctified but by freest grace, most absolutely and most sovereignly free. We are agreed that the highest perfection of sanctification that can ever possibly be attained unto, signifies nothing at all to deserve, to procure by merit, our justification. We are agreed that both, as they are from the most free and sovereign grace,

so they do come through the mediation of Jesus Christ, the alone Mediator between God and man;—that the righteousness is entirely and only Christ's, by which we are justified; that the Spirit is most entirely and only Christ's, by which we are sanctified; according to that in 1 Cor. vi. 9—11. Such as are mentioned there were, before, the grossest and vilest of sinners,—fornicators, adulterers, idolaters, etc. "And such," saith the apostle, "were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." You cannot but be in all these agreed.

We are agreed that whoever does sincerely, evangelically believe in God through Christ, receive Christ, is united with him, or is in him; who doth by serious repentance turn to God; whose heart is won to love him in truth as his highest and best good; who is conformed to the image of his Son; and who, having been made willing in the day of his power, doth now render a sincere obedience to him; every such one is in a safe state, accepted with God, has found grace in his eyes.

For no words of Scripture can be plainer than that they that believe on Christ shall not perish, but have everlasting life;[1] yea, that they have it,[2]—*that* life is begun with them which is never to end, or which is in the sure way to be continued till it become everlasting: that they that repent, and turn from all their transgressions, their iniquities shall not be their ruin;[3] that God hath prepared the things which eye hath not seen for them that love him, and will give them the crown of life, according to his own promise;[4] that Christ doth become the author of eternal salvation to them that obey him;[5] that there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ, that walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit;[6] that it must turn wholly to the praise of the glory of his grace, that God makes them accepted in the Beloved.[7] We

[1] John iii. 16. [2] Ver. 36.
[3] Ezek. xviii. 30. [4] 1 Cor. ii. 9; James i. 12. [5] Heb. v. 9.
[6] Rom. viii. 1. [7] Eph. i. 6.

do all agree, that they that do never believe, they that never repent, they that never love God, they that are never brought to obey him, that live in enmity and rebellion against him to the last breath, must needs be in a lost state, are never justified, never accepted with God; are liable unto coming and abiding wrath, and remain under condemnation.[1] We agree that such faith, such repentance, such love to God, such obedience, even in the most entire sincerity, are not to be considered at all as any cause of such a person's acceptance with God; they do characterize the accepted person, but they cause it not, they deserve nothing; nay, they could not if they were perfect. No internal work of the Holy Ghost, though in this our present state it were most absolutely perfect, so as to exclude everything of sin, could be any part of that righteousness which must justify us before God. To suppose that it could, would be manifestly to confound the offices of the Redeemer and of the Holy Ghost. It was Christ that was to merit for us: the Holy Ghost was never to merit for us. It was not the Holy Ghost that died for us; nor can his operations or productions in us have any causative influence to the meriting the justified and accepted state of any person before God. They were never meant for that purpose, nor have any aptitude or accommodateness thereunto. They cannot make us *never to have sinned*, nor can atone for our having done so. We cannot but be agreed in this, for it is plain, and carries its own evidence in itself;—that is, suppose we a person, as soon as he is converted, made perfectly free from sin that very moment, by some extraordinary, powerful work of the Holy Ghost on his soul,—how shall that expiate for his having been a sinner?

Now where there are so great things wherein we agree, and we make little of them,—things that should raise up our souls, and awaken all our powers unto highest acts of love, gratitude, and praise to God and our Redeemer, and fill us with wonder and pleasure as oft as we think of them,—

[1] John iii. 16, 36; Luke xiii. 3; Col. iii. 6.

an indisposition of mind to take notice of and consider such things, (so as to improve and use them to the great purposes of the Christian life, as incentives to the love of God, an entire devoting of ourselves to him, vigorous and diligent serving of him, and walking holily and comfortably with him in our daily course,) through a greater disposition to contend about we well know not what besides; too plainly shows much of that carnal disaffection which the apostle doth here animadvert upon. There are other things belonging to this same purpose that I find I cannot reach to at this time.

SERMON II.

GALATIANS v. 16.

"THIS I SAY THEN, WALK IN THE SPIRIT, AND YE SHALL NOT FULFIL THE LUST OF THE FLESH."

I HAVE begun to show you by what indications much carnality may appear and show itself in and about spiritual matters; as for instance, in the controverting, yea, even in the defending the truths of the gospel; and intend now to proceed.

1. You have heard it does so, when Christians, who are very far agreed in the most important things, make little of the things wherein they are agreed, though never so great, in comparison of the much less things wherein they differ; as all serious Christians must be understood to agree in far greater things than it is possible for them to differ in. I lately mentioned to you sundry great agreements that I cannot doubt to be very common with serious and intelligent Christians, which I shall not now stay to repeat, but add;—

2. Such carnality shows itself when there is too much aptness to lay greater stress than is needful upon some unscriptural words in delivering Scripture doctrine. Here we may take carnality as the apostle doth,[1] "While there are divisions among you, are ye not carnal, and walk," or act, "as men?" There is more of the man in it than of the Christian, when we can make a shift to divide about a word, and that, in the present use of it, devised only by man; when words that are merely of human stamp, and used in no such

[1] 1 Cor. iii. 3.

sense or to no such purpose in Scripture, however they may be significant, yet too great a stress and weight is laid upon them, either by too stiffly adhering to them on the one hand or too vehemently decrying them on the other hand; while perhaps,—and it is a certain and a known case,—the meaning may be the same on both sides, and would be so, or would appear to be so, if such and such words were waived, and others more understood were chosen and used in the room of them. It is true we are not to think, and no man of sense can, that we are obliged never to use other words in such matters but such as the translators of the Bible have hit on in their version of it, as if that must consecrate those words and leave all other under a profane character; but if it appear that any word of a doubtful signification is misunderstood by many, creates offence, and through some fixed, immovable prejudice or prepossession that some *other* notion of it hath obtained in the minds of many, it will always be otherwise understood by them than we intend; let it rather go for a *nehushtan*, than that the peace of the church should be broken, and men's minds be disturbed and disquieted by it. This is the case when any such words that might be arbitrarily used or laid aside are made so necessary, or so destructive, as if all religion were saved or lost by them: when one so cries up such a word, as if he would say, 'The heavens must fall if I have not my word;' and another decries it as much, as if he said, 'They must fall if it be admitted, or if I have not mine.' Sure there must be in this case that forbidden λογομαχία, of which the apostle speaks;[1] which they are usually most apt to be guilty of that are also guilty of what is put in conjunction therewith, 'perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds;' with these falls in this 'strife of words.' Whether that be to be understood objectively or instrumentally, strife about words or wordy strifes, I shall not here determine. But that whole context is worth our considering:[2] "If any man teach otherwise,"—do ἑτεροδιδασκαλεῖν, teach other or *alien* things, or after another or *alien*

[1] In that; 1 Tim. vi. 4. [2] Ver. 3—5.

manner,—"and consent not to the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; he is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself."

And therewith agrees what we find also mentioned, with the charge of avoiding them,—"foolish and unlearned questions, that gender strifes."[1] Some may fancy they make themselves considerable for learning by such altercations; but the apostle slurs that conceit, calling them "unlearned." So I remember Seneca[2] says of the Greeks, calling it their *disease* that they made such ado with certain idle questions,—as, how many rowers belonged to the vessel that carried Ulysses? and such like, that he there mentions; whereby, says he, they did not appear more learned, but only more troublesome.

3. When we consider with too little indulgence one another's mistakes and misapplications in the use even of Scripture words, placing them, as some may do, upon things to which they do not properly belong, when yet they agree about the things themselves. There are words in the Scripture revelation that it may be the one or the other of disagreeing persons may apply to one thing, when the other, perhaps truly, thinks they belong more properly to another. There is an inconvenience in this: the case is much as if one should have an idea of all the streets of London in his mind as they lie, but he mistakes the names and transposes them: as, for instance, calls Cheapside Cornhill, or Cornhill Cheapside. He does not speak so intelligibly to another, but at the same time may have the same idea in his mind of London that another has. And this however, when it occurs in religious disceptations, ought to be considered,—though there be an inconvenience in it,—with indulgence, as knowing we are all liable to mistakes in greater matters. And as it

[1] 2 Tim. ii. 23.

[2] *De Brev. Vit.*

is possible there may be somewhat of carnality, some perverseness, some cloud arising from infirm flesh, that darkens the mind and occasions it so to mistake; so it is much greater, not to be able to bear in another such a mistake.

4. When there is an agreement about the main and principal things that the Scripture revelation contains and carries in it, but there is not that agreement about their mutual respects and references unto one another. This is a matter indeed, of greater importance; there can be no true scheme given of gospel truths and doctrines if such their references and respects to one another be not rightly understood. But an entire true scheme of Christian doctrines will not enter into all minds; and, for the most part, they are particular passages or particular truths that strike hearts, and that God makes use of to do souls good by. And if so entire a scheme will not enter into the minds of many, whether through their darkness or ignorance, or whether through anything of prejudice that was as it were forelaid in their minds; nothing remains but to be patient of it, and to do them what good we can even upon their own terms, and in the way wherein they are capable of it. There was such an obstruction in minds among these Corinthians, even upon this very account of their carnality; as we see, (in that third of the First Epistle,) that the apostle tells them, "I could not speak to you as spiritual,"—it must be understood comparatively,—"but as unto carnal;" and therefore, as a wise instructor, thought it needful to keep back, to withhold some things from them that he reckoned might be "meat" to them, solid meat, strong meat, because they had been hitherto unable to bear it, nor were yet able. It is in that case needful rather somewhat to ἐπέχειν, to withhold some things or suspend, than, by a continued and too urgent inculcation, to frustrate one's own design; and, while we would have *all* enter into less capable minds, to have nothing enter. It may sometimes be, that when too much is endeavoured at once to be borne in upon them against an invincible obstruction, we only engage them to fortify the more strongly, and

shut out all; and so we defeat ourselves. They gain nothing, and our whole design is frustrated and lost. In all our applications to the souls of men, there must be patient waiting, and very gradual endeavours used, without force and furious striving; yea, in our having to do with such as are yet the very vassals and captives of the devil. So the apostle speaks:[1] "The servant of the Lord should not strive," but be "patient towards" even "all men, and wait," even in reference to them that are hitherto altogether impenitent, "if God will give them repentance . . . that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, that are led captive by him at his will." Much more are such methods to be used "towards them who call on the name of the Lord out of a pure heart," as he speaks a little above in the same context.[2] And consider the extent and endearingness of this character. It is to be deplored that it extends not farther; but so far as it doth extend, God forbid it should not have a most persuasive efficacy and power upon our spirits, to make us follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, even with all them that bear that character; that is, "that call on the Lord with a pure heart;" "their Lord," as it is elsewhere, "as well as ours," be they of what party or denomination soever.

5. Much of this carnality appears about such matters, when we are over-intent to mould and square gospel truths and doctrines by human measures and models, and too earnestly strive to make them correspond: that is, when we aim beyond what things can admit, to stretch, or rather to shrink and contract, God's transactions with men unto the scheme and model of our own abstract notions and definitions, or of merely human civil or political economies, administrations, and transactions,—such I mean as obtain among men towards one another; and so labour to have the same measures take place throughout in reference to Divine things as do in human; whereby more than is needful, useful, or indeed so much as possible to agree and quadrate, of logic,

[1] 2 Tim. ii. 24. [2] Ver. 22.

metaphysics, and of civil and other law, is introduced into theology. Illustrations indeed may be taken thence, but not strict measures. It is impossible sometimes they should be so. Divers things are taken among men in such notions as in delivering the doctrine of the gospel cannot have a full and adequate place; they often will not exactly agree or correspond: as, if in speaking of God's pardoning and justifying a sinner, we should take our measures of pardon and justification strictly from what obtains amongst men, we shall find a great difference and disagreement. For plain it is that, according to human measures, the same person cannot be both pardoned and justified. He that is pardoned cannot be justified, and he that is justified cannot be pardoned. But according to Divine and gospel measures both are truly said of the same person. In the one case there is an inconsistency, in the other a fair agreement of the same things. He that is at a human bar a justified person, needs no pardon, his case admits of none: if he were justified, pardon were absurdly talked of; and so if he were pardoned, that does plainly imply that he was not justified. It is quite otherwise if you bring these things to the gospel, and God's dealing with sinners. I cannot now spend time in showing you distinctly how these things do lie, and are very capable of being accommodated in the sinner's case; some resemblance will appear, not an exact or entire correspondency. The instance, however, serves our present purpose, to show that God's procedure and methods in his dispensations towards men, will not in all things square with human measures.

Again; if we speak of the doctrine of God's covenant in Jesus Christ, we cannot take our measures from human covenants that pass between man and man, especially one private man and another; for there the persons are under no obligation before their mutual consent. It is not so between God and man; God's covenants are laws as well as covenants; and so a man is, before he consents, obliged to consent. Therefore, here again it appears gospel doctrines

are not to be exactly measured by human models: nor should this be too earnestly endeavoured; we should not too much set our minds upon it; it is to offer at a thing in its own nature not practicable, and there is too much of man in it.

6. When there is a discernible proneness to oppose the great things of the gospel to one another, and to exalt or magnify one above or against another. It is too plain this may more commonly come under observation, than it doth under that reprehension which it deserves. For instance, those two great things that I mentioned at first, justification and sanctification, both very great things, of most apparent and confessed necessity to the salvation and blessedness of the souls of men,—justification, that a man's state may be good, sanctification, that the temper of his soul may become so;—but is it not too common to magnify one of these above or against the other? to contend and dispute with great fervour concerning the higher value and excellency, the dignity or precedency of this or that, and to which the preference belongs? to be so much taken up about the one, as seldom to think of the other, and, it may be, not well to savour and relish the mention of it? Some are so taken up about the business of justification,—that admirable vouchsafement of grace to sinners,—that they care not to hear of sanctification; and so all their religion is foreign to them, or lies in somewhat without them, or in a mere relative thing, that alters not their spirits. A strange religion! that makes a man nothing the better man: or notwithstanding which he is, in the habitual frame of his soul, as bad as ever—vain, terrene, worldly-minded, proud, passionate, wrathful, malicious, vindictive, false, deceitful; perhaps (for that is not worse than the rest) very impurely sensual. But,—no man can tell why, nor to be sure he himself,—he takes himself to be a justified person: and perhaps his imagination of it raises in him a sort of rapturous, unaccountable joy, without ground or root, and which will not only wither, but turn, without a seasonable and merciful change, into endless horror,—weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth! A fearful and most

surprising issue and disappointment of a high and unmisgiving confidence and expectation to be saved! With others, whose temper, circumstances, or temptations, have less inclined them to rejoicing, their religion is made up of tormenting anxieties and fears, and consists in the daily revolving of perpetual, endless doubts, whether they are justified or no,—without any direct, formed design of being or doing good; by which they might, in due time, come to have more truly comfortable apprehensions of the goodness of their state. They more care to be pardoned for being bad, than to become good!

Again, on the other hand, there may be some so wholly taken up about what they are in themselves to be and do, and in the earnest, but too abstract, or less evangelical, and therefore less fruitful, endeavour after higher pitches of sanctity, without due reference to the grace, Spirit, and blood of a Redeemer, that they neglect and look not after their justification and acceptance with God in him; nor do relish and savour as they ought the doctrine of the gospel herein: do more incline to a philosophical and scarcely Christian Christianity; forgetting Christ to be their Redeemer, their Lord and vital Head, and that they are or ought to be, under his conduct and through his mediation, daily tending to God and blessedness.

But now, upon the whole, when there appears an aptness or disposition to separate these two, justification and sanctification, from one another, or either of them from abiding in Christ, or to oppose them to one another, or contend about the priority of the one or the other—when no doubt they go together; and about the preference or excellency of the one above the other,—*which* is the more considerable thing; herein appears much carnality of mind, an unsound, injudicious, distempered spirit. And it is a like case, as if a malefactor at the same time is under sentence by which he is condemned to die, and under a most dangerous disease that appears very probably mortal to him: he has a compassionate prince, willing to save his life; and he at once vouchsafes him his pardon, and provides a very skilful and able physician for the curing

of his disease: the wretched creature, hearing of this, falls a disputing which of these is the greater favour, 'To have my disease cured, or to have my crime pardoned;' and in the heat of the dispute he neglects both, looks after neither. This is indeed less supposable in the instanced case; but how great a distemper doth it show, that it should be so in this, which is of so inexpressibly greater importance!

And now further, it is agreed on all hands that faith in a Redeemer is necessary to salvation with those that are adult, and capable of attending to the gospel revelation; but here, what disputes are there raised! with what fervour are they managed, concerning the place of it, or the kind of that necessity which this faith is of, in order to the safe state of a sinner! A like case again, as if such a condemned malefactor is told of his prince's professed gracious intendments towards him, but he doubts the sincerity of his professions. He gives him all desirable assurances, and tells him, 'Do but trust me, and all shall be well.' But he presently falls a disputing, 'Yea, but how am I to consider this trust?'—we suppose it only such a trust as may be fitly enough placed upon a man,—'which way is it to contribute towards my safety or welfare? Is it to be an instrument or a condition?' How absurd an abuse were this of the clemency of a propitious prince! If there were a public proclamation of pardon to many offenders at once concerned together, and they all agree only to disagree; to vie with one another their skill in criticizing upon the words or in disputing the method, contending about the order and coherence of parts; and make it their business not thankfully to accept, but cavil at, to tear, and mangle, and pluck in pieces the proclamation, and defeat the kind design and gracious tender of their prince; what clemency would not this provoke to the highest resentment and indignation? And what now can be stranger or more perverse, than that a revelation from heaven of so much good-will to men, in the substance so plain, and that so directly concerns the salvation of souls, should be so torn and mangled; considered for no purpose less than that for which it

was vouchsafed; and that the very end itself should be in so great part eluded, that was so kindly designed in it? though yet the endeavour of salving difficulties that occur, by earnest prayer, diligent study, and by amicable and placid collation among brethren, or comparing of sentiments, sincerely designed for a clearer understanding the frame of the gospel truth; or how it may be with most advantage represented to men for the promoting of the common salvation, can be liable to no just reprehension;—being managed with that reverence that so sacred things challenge, and with a due sense of our own ignorance and imperfection. That only which is blameable in this case, and whereof I reckon no account can be given or defence made, is that when for the substance, the gospel propounds and lays before us so plain a way wherein men are to endeavour the saving of their souls, as wherein the wayfaring man, though a fool, needs not err, —that is, there must be repentance towards God, faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, a renewed heart, a holy life,—one comes and pretends to show that order of these things one way, so as to compose a scheme of them that is represented as most necessary to be observed and held to: 'No,' saith another, 'I will give you a righter scheme of salvation, another way,' and mightily presses the necessity of that, and the dangerous mistakes of the other. And thus they cover a plain way with thorns and briers; do not instruct, but perplex and distract, whom they should direct; create distinctions and oppositions of scheme to scheme, not only without necessity, but almost without a difference; and yet insist with vehemency, and lay men's salvation upon their understanding the matter so or so, when it is hoped thousands have been saved that never heard of the one scheme or the other as they are distinguished and opposed to each other. Who can justify this? Again,—

7. When any do with great zeal contend for this or that opinion or notion, as very sacred and highly spiritual,—as they account,—with no other design, than that under that pretence they may indulge their own carnal inclination with the greater liberty. It was the very genius of this sort of men

against whom this epistle was meant: whether they were then called Gnostics it matters not; the name well agreed to them, and they were known by it afterwards. They were men of much pretence to knowledge and sublime notions, as they counted them: and herein lay their religion; and under this pretence they indulged themselves in all manner of licentiousness. When any do take up with mere notions, which they are zealous for, accounting them very highly spiritual; and under pretext of these they indulge the carnality of their hearts, if not of their lives and practices too; and their fine notion, as they account it, which they more uncertainly father upon the Spirit of truth, must be substituted in the room of all that love, meekness, humility, heavenliness, self-denial, which are the most certain and undoubted fruits of this blessed Spirit:—when under the pretence of being notional men, and of knowing a great deal more than most others do, any neglect their own spirits, and suffer pride, avarice, ambition, vindictiveness, and falsehood, to shelter themselves under the thin cobweb of a few fine-spun notions; and they can now hereupon live at random, with more ease to their own minds, and they think, with better reputation as to other men: here is a glittering show only, of an airy, imagined, pretended spirituality, drawn over, but which doth not hide, corrupt, rotten, putrid flesh.

Have you never known such a case, when it might be said, 'There goes a proud, ambitious man, a covetous man, a false man, a malicious man; but he is a man of rare and singular notions, knows a great deal more than most others do!' And this must atone for all his crimes with God and man, and both quiet his conscience and salve his credit together! And who can doubt but this man must be very fond of his own opinions, and zealously contend and dispute for them upon any occasion,—though he never so ineptly make it,—when they are to do him so great service, and to stand him in so much stead; that is, to supply the room for him of all real religion and morality? And if he have happened upon such notions as are really true, and revealed by God himself,—

by how much the more certainly Divine they be, so much the greater is the wickedness, so basely to prostitute sacred things; truths that are the very offspring of heaven, unto so vile purposes. It were fault enough to make them serve different or other purposes than they are capable of; that is, to supply the room of religion and real goodness. What an indignity is that to religion, to suppose an empty, spiritless opinion can fill up its place; a thing that does a man no good, for which his mind and spirit are nothing the better; much more, that shelters what is so very bad! Can this serve for religion? That religion that consists with being proud, with being deceitful, with being malicious, with being revengeful, —learn, learn to despise such a religion; much more, * one * that is taken up to veil over these, and exclude all real goodness.

8. Again when, in the maintaining any doctrine of the gospel in opposition to others, we industriously set ourselves to pervert their meaning, and impute things to them that they never say. Or again; if we charge their opinions whom we oppose with consequences which they disclaim; professing, it may be, rather to disclaim their former opinion and change their judgment, than admit such consequences, if they could discern any connexion between the one and the other:—this surely argues a mighty disposition to contend, when we will quarrel with one that is really of our own mind; for herein he appears to be virtually already in the same mind, in a greater matter at least than he differs with us about. Because no man charges another's opinion with a consequence, designing thereby to oblige him to change his opinion, but as supposing it to be an agreed thing between them both that the consequence is worse than the opinion. When, therefore, the consequence I charge is disclaimed by him whom I oppose, either it is justly charged, or it is not. If it be not, his opinion may be true, notwithstanding what I herein say to the contrary, and I am certainly so far in an error. But if it be justly charged, being yet disclaimed, we are *formally* agreed concerning the consequence, and are *virtually* agreed concerning the disputed point too; because he professedly

disavows it upon supposition such a consequence would follow, which yet perhaps he sees not; and so the agreement must be much greater than the difference. And yet commonly this signifies nothing in order to peace; that is, it is not enough that I see the same things that you do, unless I also see them too with your eyes.

9. When such disputes do arise at length to wrath, to angry strife, yea, and even to fixed enmity,—what dreadful carnality is here! Most deservedly so called, if you only consider 'flesh,' or carnality, as an unreasonable, a brutal thing. For what can be more unreasonable or unaccountable than to fall out with another man, because he thinks not as I do, or receives not my sentiments,—as I also do not receive his? Is it not to be considered that he no further differs from me than I do from him? If there be cause of anger upon this account, on one side, there is the same cause on the other too; and then whither shall this grow? And how little can this avail upon a rational estimate! Can any good come of it? Doth it tend to the clearing of truth? Shall we see the better through the clouds and dust we raised? Is a good cause served by it? Or do we think it possible the wrath of man should ever work the righteousness of God? And when such carnalities as these do exert themselves, and the hot steams and fumes arise, which the apostle here calls the lusts of the flesh, the flesh lusting to envy, lusting to wrath; what is the product, or even the productive cause, but that sort of fire which is without light? and you know what fire that resembles! And if a man once find any fervour of this kind stir or kindle in his breast, if he aright consider, he would no more cherish it than one would do a brand thrown into his bosom from the infernal fire. One would think in this case, 'What have I stirring within me? something akin to hell! Can this conduce to the service of divine and heavenly truth?' And let it be sadly considered, our being upon such accounts angry with one another is a dismal token of God's being angry with us all, and a provoking cause of it too. Methinks that should be a qualmy

thought, and strike our souls with a strange damp: 'Shall I indulge that in myself, that is a mark upon me of Divine displeasure; and upon all in whom it is found?' To have his Holy Spirit retire, that blessed Spirit of love and of a sound mind, and to leave us under the power of a rebellious, lusting flesh; can this be grateful, or not be a dismaying, frightful thing? And whereas a right scheme of gospel doctrine is the thing pretended to be striven for, I beseech you consider: the more entirely and the more deeply the true scheme of gospel doctrine is inlaid in a man's soul, the more certainly it must form it all into meekness, humility, gentleness, love, kindness, and benignity towards fellow-Christians, of whatsoever denomination; not confined, not limited, as that of the Pharisees, unto their own party; but diffusing and spreading itself to all that bear the character and cognizance of Christ. The Spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ is a Spirit of greater amplitude,—extends and diffuses itself through the whole body of Christ.

Nor can any man more effectually disgrace his own cause, or make sure to worst himself in it, than by defending it wrathfully. For admit that he err whom I oppose, a thousand to one but that my wrath is worse than his error, probably a thousand times worse. I go about therefore to take away a mote from his eye, having a beam in my own; or am more concerned for a misplaced hair upon his head, than I am for a fiery ulcer in my own breast. We are not, it is true, to be so stoical as to condemn the natural passion of anger, as such, for sinful. But if it exceeds its cause, and sets not with the sun, it becomes strange, unhallowed fire. But again,—

10. There is still a further appearance of great carnality in such cases, when any do adventure to judge of the consciences and states of them whom they oppose, or from whom they differ; when they ascend the tribunal, usurp the throne, pass sentence upon them, as men of no conscience, or of no sincerity or uprightness of heart with God;—as if theirs were to be the universal conscience, the measure of all con-

sciences; and he that cannot be governed by their conscience must have none at all; or he be stark blind towards truth, towards God, and towards himself, that sees not everything they see or fancy themselves to see.

This is a most high usurpation upon Divine prerogative; and how can any insensibly slide into such an evil as this in the face of so plain and so awful a text of Scripture, that so severely animadverts upon it,—that 14th to the Romans, in sundry verses of it? With what reverence and dread should it strike a man's soul in such a case, when we have the rights of the Redeemer asserted in those whom he hath bought with his blood; and are told that "for this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living!"[1] and it is thereupon further said to us, "Who art thou that judgest another's servant?" "Why dost thou judge thy brother? or set at naught thy brother? we must all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ."[2] We are all of us his; he both died, and revived, and rose again, that he might be "Lord of all;"[3] and here of "dead and living;"—that is, that he might be owner of all,—which is the first notion of *Dominus*, or 'Lord,'—and in both worlds, the visible and the invisible; that into which many are dead and deceased from hence, and so to us become invisible; and many that, yet surviving, are still visible to us. So ample is his dominion! And because the *jus imperii*, 'the right of government,' of which judgment is the last conclusive act, hath for its foundation the *jus dominii*, it is therefore asserted to him as the *coronis* and complement, the very *summity* of his acquired rights, that he is to finish all things by the last judgment, which must pass upon both the already dead and the yet living. Thus is the ground of the expostulation laid: 'Who art thou who presumest to justle him out of this his supreme and most sacred right? Perhaps the matter disputed about may be doubtful, but there is no doubt concerning this incommunicable authority of our Lord Christ, or concerning his law against such judging.'[4] And to run into certain sin,

[1] Verse 9. [2] Verse 10. [3] Acts x. 36. [4] Matt. vii. 1.

in a furious chasing of uncertain error, what consideration, what tenderness of offending, of affronting him, and of hazarding our own souls, is there in all this?

To judge other men's consciences is of so near affinity with governing them, that they that can allow themselves to do the former, want only power, not will or inclination, to offer at the other too; which puts the matter out of doubt that when men of this temper complain of such usurpation, it is not that they think it an offence in itself, but against them only, and that no consciences ought to be free but their own. The proof of an honest and equal mind herein is, when we judge this to be evil, not being hurt by it; or abhor to hurt others in this kind, when we have power to do it. Upon which account that passage is memorable of the Emperor Maximilian II. to a certain prelate, that there was no sin, no tyranny, more grievous, than to affect dominion over men's consciences; and that they who do so, go about to invade the tower of heaven;—a considerable saying from so great a prince, that lived and died in the Roman communion. What shall be thought of any such Protestants, that, without any colour or shadow of a ground, besides differing from them in some very disputable and unimportant opinions, shall presume to judge of other men's consciences, and consequently of their states Godward, which such a one as he thought it so presumptuous wickedness to attempt to overrule or govern?

11. When we over-magnify our own understandings, and assume too much to ourselves;—that is, do expect that our minds be taken for standards to all minds; as if *we*, of all mankind, were exempt from error or the possibility of being mistaken. A certain sort of *φιλαυτία* or *αὐθάδεια*, an excess of love and admiration of ourselves, or over-pleasedness with ourselves, too much self-complacency, is the true, though very deep and most hidden root of our common mischief in such cases. We wrap up ourselves within ourselves, and then we are all the world; do only compare ourselves with ourselves,—never letting it enter into our minds that others

have their sentiments too, perhaps wiser than ours,—but abound in our own sense: and while as the apostle in that case says, we are not wise, and perhaps are the only persons that think ourselves so, we yet take upon us as if we were fit to dictate to the world, to all Christians, and to all mankind; or as if we only were the men, and wisdom must die with us!

This is a sort of evil than which there is none more common, and none less observed; none wherewith the guilty are so little apt to charge themselves, or admit conviction of it. For, I pray, do but consider: all the several differing parties amongst us do with one voice pretend to be for peace. But how, and upon what terms? Why, that all the rest are presently to be of their mind; and that is all the peace that most are for. For where (scarce anywhere) is the man to be found, or how great a rarity is he, that entertains the thought, 'That there may, for aught I know, be much to be redressed and corrected in my apprehensions of things, to make me capable of falling in with that truth which ought to be common to all?' There is an expectation with many, of a good time and state of things before this world end, when all shall be of one mind and judgment; but the most think it must be by all men's becoming of their mind and judgment. And of this self-conceit it is usually a harder thing to fasten conviction upon men than of most other evils. We have more hope in speaking against drunkenness, murder, or any of the grossest kind of wickedness; for there the conscience of the guilty falls in and takes part with the reprover. But we can more easily, and more frequently do,—though not frequently enough,—observe the faults of the inferior faculties, or of our external actions, than of the faculty itself which should observe. Our mind, which is naturally like our eye, is in this too like; that is, that it can see everything but itself. It doth not by using it, preserve its peculiar, self-reflecting power; is blind towards itself, beyond what naturally belongs to it. An object may be too near our bodily eye to be seen. Our mind is herein too bodily, too much carnalized, sunk too deep into flesh. It is

the next thing to itself; and here, not by its primitive nature, (by which as an intellectual sun, it could revert its beams, and turn them inward upon itself,) but by depravation, it for the most part sees nothing; or doth worse, thinks itself to see what is not to be seen; certain imaginary excellencies, which make the man his own idol,—an object of a sort of adoration to himself, and of scorn and derision, most probably, to every one else. In this case every man is however, most commonly innocent in his own eyes, or still thinks he is in the right: amidst the so vast a variety of apprehensions and sentiments, no one suspects himself to be in the wrong. All are for the truth, and they are all for peace and union: by which some indeed more gently mean, they hope all will quit their former mistaken opinions and ways (as in great kindness to themselves they take for granted all men's are but their own) and come wholly over to them. Others, that have not breasts capable of even so much charity as this, not only are as much lovers and admirers of themselves, but so vehement haters of all that presume to differ from them, that they think them not fit to live in the world that durst adventure to do so. The meaning, therefore, of their being for peace is, that they would have all destroyed that are not of their minds: and then, as the Roman historian speaks, 'Quando solitudinem fecere, appellant pacem;'—'When they have made a desolation,' so that they themselves are left alone in the world, 'that they will call peace.'

But you will say, What is to be done? or what would I persuade in this case of differing apprehensions and ways still remaining among Christians? I answer, Not presently to unbelieve all that ever a man hath believed before, or to abandon on the sudden his former sentiments, or to find fault with himself for having thought them right; for it is a contradiction to be of any opinion, and not then to think it right. Nor therefore is it scepticism, by any means, that I would advise to, as if there were nothing to be thought certain:—but this; that whereas the greatest and most necessary things in religion are most plain,—that is, either

most plain in themselves, or most expressly revealed in the word of God,—here let us be steadfast ourselves, without being severe towards other men. Other things, that are more matter of doubt and dispute, by how much the less plain they are, we should count so much the less necessary. In reference therefore, to these less momentous things, about which there is with us most of jangling, there ought always to be great modesty and distrust of our own understandings, and a continued readiness to receive information, with constant looking up to the Father of lights for further illumination; and a resolution, wherein we, with others, "have attained, to walk by the same rule, minding the same" agreed "things," hoping God will reveal his mind to the otherwise minded in his own time; as the apostle, in Phil. iii. 16, 17. But to hasten to a close, I further add,—

12. Lastly, Such carnality greatly shows itself in an affectation and desire of having such disputes still kept afoot, and the contests continued without either limit or rational design. This shows a deep tincture, and is a plain indication of a mind to a very great degree carnalized, when a mighty pleasure is taken to see the saw drawn, and the ball kept up. And if the question be asked, 'Pray how long?' so little of reasonable answer can be given, that it might as well be said in plain terms, 'Till all words be spent, till speech or language fail, till Elias come, or doomsday come.' So that if there were never so much reason to commend the having said somewhat in defence of this or that disputed point, we might yet say, as Seneca did of Cicero's so much overpraising his own consulship, 'I blame him not for praising it without cause, but for doing it without end;' or that he could never give over, or tell when he had said enough. Upon the same terms upon which it is now so much desired such disputes should be continued, when what is truly *enough* is already said, they might as well wish they always should; which signifies that when we say we would have men contend for truth, we wish it not so much for truth's sake, as for the contention's sake. 'By all means,' say they, 'strive for the

truth;' not that they care so much for truth, as for the strife. For in some circumstances there is not an end in view, that is rationally to be designed or served by it on this side the end of all things; nor, consequently, any good principle that is to be exercised or gratified thereby. What is needful to be said in the matters already referred to, for the informing and satisfying of tractable minds, sincerely willing to understand the truth, lies within a little compass. And when in controversy that is once said which truly belongs to the very point in question, the rest is commonly trifling and reflection, or the perplexing of the matter more, and "darkening counsel by words without knowledge." If love to truth be alleged for the principle that prompts men to covet so continual altercations about it, I would say this shows more want of love to it. For hereby they are diverted from that which renders it most of all amiable, and for which it ought chiefly to be loved,—as it is the truth according to *godliness*, and by which we are to be sanctified and begotten more and more, as of an immortal seed, into the Divine likeness. Experience shows how little disputes better men's spirits. If we love divine truth, why do we not feed and live upon it, and enjoy its pleasant relishes; but relish gravel more, or chaff and bran? For thither the agitation of continued controversies about it doth soon sift it, the grain of flour (the kidney of the wheat) being passed away, and gone from us. Can none remember when the disputative humour had even eaten out the power and spirit of practical religion and godliness? Thither things are again tending, if, either by severity or mercy,—one may say, rather than not otherwise, by merciful severity,—God do not prevent and repress that tendency. As yet I fear the humour is violent; when the fervour of men's spirits is such as to carry them over all Scripture directions and animadversions, that they signify nothing with them; only make it their business each one to animate the more vogued champions of their own party into the highest ferments, and cry, 'Dispute, dispute; write, write; preach, preach, one against another; let not the

business go over so; do not keep silence.' Thus are many, as the apostle speaks, "puffed up for one against another."[1] And what! has such a text of Scripture as that no edge, no point, by which to lance, to pierce such a tumour? No; when the humour is once up, and has enwrapped men's hearts, is settled there, and hath obdured them to a brawny hardness, such texts of Scripture, though so mighty pat and apposite, are esteemed by them but as leviathan esteems spears and swords,—like straw and rotten wood; they do not enter into men's hearts. A strange kind of obduration!

And how supposable is it that they who are so puffed up for others may also, through the known corruption of nature even in the best, do herein not a little to the puffing up of them too. The apostle's concluding of this chapter with those cautions,—"Let us not be desirous of vainglory, provoking one another, envying one another,"—immediately upon his renewing of the precept[2] of walking in the Spirit, and immediately before those words, "If a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness;"[3] shows how he understood the case to be with these Galatian Christians, that as to doctrinals were yet sound and unfallen:—that there was yet such carnality working in their continued contests, though for the truth, such pride, such affectation of vainglory, such wrathfulness, as showed it was not mere love to truth that kept up the contest, but some such worse principles. Nothing is plainer than that principles and ends measure one another. And when that is done or coveted to be done, that serves no good end; or is so done as not to serve but destroy or hinder any end that is truly good; the principle must be very bad that moves the wheel. Disorderly, eccentric motions betray their principle and end together. When the carriage and conduct of an affair that carries with it the appearance of serving the truth, is impetuous, eager, precipitant; when there is no good end in view of the present so modified endeavour; when enough is agreed already to serve the most important ends,

[1] 1 Cor. iv. 6. [2] Gal. v. 25. [3] Gal. vi. 1.

—unity among brethren, the salvation of souls,—and yet things are further insisted on, unnecessary to either, yea, prejudicial to both, and upon which the weight and stress of either of these cannot be laid without sin; it too plainly appears, vainglory to one's self or the slurring of a designed adversary is the end; and then the principle is proportionable. Yet even in the light, and when matters are thus open and in view, oppositions are pushed on, and men's spirits rise to that pitch, as to bear down whatever is proposed only with design to make their career a little slower; yea, and they are apt, rather than hearken, to put opprobrious names and characters upon them that are not altogether so furious as themselves.

Nor have they themselves the patience to consider consequences, and whither these things tend; that is, that God is provoked, that the souls of men are endangered,—greatly endangered. I have found in my own conversation, that some even in distress, in agonies, have said, 'Lord, be merciful to us; I know not which way to go; one preaches one thing, another preaches the quite contrary.' I know they mistake; we do generally in substance preach the same gospel. Thanks be to God, his gospel is not confined to a few men, or to this or that party of men. But in the meantime it is a thing of very ill consequence to lay stumbling-blocks before the blind, bars and obstructions in the way of the weak and the lame, whereby they may be turned out of the way who should rather be strengthened.

It is not considered that where the danger is less of an utter ruin to the souls of men, there is however occasioned a great languor and enfeeblement. They should be considered and treated not only as being weak, but lest they should be made so. When they are diverted from the proper means of improvement and growth, and their minds are alienated from those means,—being otherwise engaged,—an ill habit is contracted; and when the distemper hath seized some, it spreads, and soon infects more. Nutriment is dispensed from the head through the body by the co-operation of the several

parts; as those texts, in Ephesians and Colossians,[1] do with great emphasis and elegancy speak. Understand it so, that how far soever there is, or ought to be, actual communion, every limb and joint contributes something to the strength and vigour of the rest. So is nourishment ministered, and spreads itself in the body to its edifying itself in love; which love, if it fail, a universal languor cannot but ensue,—the free circulation of vital spirits being obstructed and stopped. And those that are most sensible, if they be not so much otherwise damnified, cannot, when they observe it, but be grieved and take it bitterly to heart, when the tokens appear to their view of a general decay. The living members of any body are pained, when the body is wasted and rent; dead, or stupified and benumbed members, feel it not, are unapprehensive. But above all, it ought to be considered—and how little is it!—that the Holy Spirit is grieved, and doth (as we may fear it will more) sensibly retire: the gospel in which it is wont to breathe is trifled with; the glorious gospel, the gospel of the grace of God,—can men find nothing else to play with?—by which that blessed Spirit hath begotten many a soul to God, and nourished them unto life eternal. That precious thing, designed for so great and sacred purposes,—as pampered, wanton children do with their food,—they dally with, or quarrel about it, or squander and throw it away. How can this but offend? The self-procured distempers which did precede and those that ensue, increase the offence. When it is said, "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God;"[2] and presently subjoined, "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking, be put away;"[3] is it not left to us to collect that these things do more peculiarly grieve the Spirit,—that Spirit of grace, of all love, goodness, sweetness, and benignity? There is but one body, and one Spirit, a Spirit that spreads vital influence in the body. What can you think of that Spirit that feels everywhere? that is in the body a universal sentient? How can that Spirit but be grieved? Passion it is not capable of, but just and sedate

[1] Eph. iv. 16; Col. ii. 19. [2] Eph. iv. 30. [3] Verse 31.

displicency, that matters should be so. How should any of us like it, to have our living body torn limb from limb, and part from part! Though with him real commotion and disturbance can have no place, intellectual resentment is infinitely greater and deeper than we can either feel or conceive.

But where this angry, tumified, proud flesh is the governing thing, none of these tremendous consequences or considerations, while it is so, take any place. The litigious, quarrelsome genius will throw off all; will find no leisure or room for a calm thought; but though the course in which we are engaged should be ready to set on fire the whole course of nature, will be still for casting abroad firebrands, and arrows, and death, and make us think this fine sport!

If indeed, there were room for any cooler thoughts, one would think such as these should not lie remote: 'How little any of us know, or are capable of knowing, in this our present state! that they that think they know most, or are most conceited of their own knowledge, know nothing as they ought to know; that they that are most apt to contend, do most of all fight in the dark; that it is too possible there may be much knowledge without love; how little such knowledge is worth; that it profits nothing; that it hurts, puffs up, when love edifies; that the devils know more than any of us, while their want of love, or their hellish malignity, makes them devils; that as by pride comes contention, so humility would contribute more to peace, (and to the discerning of truth too,) than the most fervent disceptation; that there is no hope of proselyting the world to my opinion or way; that if I cannot be quiet till I have made such and such of my mind, I shall still be unquiet while *others* are not of it,—that is, always; that if some one's judgment must be a standard to the world, there are thousands fitter for it than mine; that they that in their angry contests think to shame their adversary, do commonly most of all shame themselves.'

But to close all, I pray let us consider: we are professedly going to heaven, that region of light and life, and purity and

love. It well indeed becomes them that are upon the way thither, modestly to inquire after truth. Humble, serious, diligent endeavours to increase in divine knowledge, are very suitable to our present state of darkness and imperfection. The product of such inquiries we shall carry to heaven with us, with whatsoever is most akin thereto, besides their usefulness in the way thither. We shall carry truth and the knowledge of God to heaven with us; we shall carry purity thither, devotedness of soul to God and our Redeemer, divine love and joy,—if we have their beginnings here,—with whatsoever else of real, permanent excellency that hath a settled, fixed seat and place in our souls now; and shall there have them in perfection. But do we think we shall carry strife to heaven? Shall we carry anger to heaven? envyings, heart-burnings, animosities, enmities, hatred of our brethren and fellow-Christians;—shall we carry these to heaven with us?

Let us labour to divest ourselves, and strike off from our spirits everything that shall not go with us to heaven or is equally unsuitable to our end and way; that there may be nothing to obstruct and hinder our abundant entrance at length into the everlasting kingdom.

A TWOFOLD DISCOURSE:

I. OF MAN'S ENMITY AGAINST GOD.

II. OF RECONCILIATION BETWEEN GOD AND MAN.

DISCOURSE I.

OF MAN'S ENMITY AGAINST GOD.

COLOSSIANS i. 21.

"AND YOU, THAT WERE SOMETIME ALIENATED AND ENEMIES IN YOUR MIND BY WICKED WORKS, YET NOW HATH HE RECONCILED."

It is a great and wonderful context, whereof these words are a part, which the time will not allow me to look into; but presently to fall on the consideration of the words in themselves, which briefly represent to us the wretched and horrid state of men, yet unconverted and not brought home to God; the happy state of those that are reduced, and brought home to him; the former, in these words, "And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works;" the latter, in those words, "Yet now hath he reconciled."

I shall apply my discourse to the former part of the words; and thence observe, that men, in their unconverted state, are alienated from God, and enemies to him by their wicked works. This I shall endeavour,—to explain, and show you the meaning of it; evince, and let you see the truth of it; apply it.

First. For the meaning of it, it is evident that it is the unconverted state of man that is here reflected upon, and referred unto: "You that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works." They were so, before they were turned to God; he writes to those Colossians, as to

converts, to them that were "saints and faithful brethren in Christ,"[1] to them that were now believers in Christ and lovers of the saints,[2] telling them they sometimes had been "enemies, by wicked works." Before conversion, they had, as is elsewhere said, "their understandings darkened, being alienated from the life of God;" walking, as "other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind."[3] This is the deplorable condition of the unconverted world; they are alienated from and enemies to God by wicked works.

We are to consider what this "alienation from God" doth import. It signifies estrangement, unacquaintance with God; and that without any inclination towards him, or disposition to seek his acquaintance. The word is emphatical, it signifies *people of another country;* you were like people of another country: of such a different language, manners, and behaviour, they that are converted are to you and you to them; you are estranged to their speech, customs, and ways. All that is of God was strange to you; men in their unconverted state are strangers to God. Wicked men do not understand the words of the gospel.[4] What relates to the kingdom of God, the unconverted man dislikes. "They say unto God, Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways."[5] Man, who was originally made for the service of God and communion with him, is now so degenerated, that he is become a mere stranger to him.

The next word to be taken notice of is 'enemies,' which may seem to add somewhat to the former word 'alienated;' there is not only no inclination towards God, but there is a disinclination; not only no affection, but a disaffection. The "carnal mind is enmity to God," and the effects of this enmity are obvious. This alienation from God is voluntary, affected, and chosen; men, in their unconverted state, are not only "strangers" to God, but "enemies" against God, and that "in their minds." A most fearful case, full of

[1] Ver. 2. [2] Ver. 4.
[3] Ephes. iv. 18, compared with the preceding verse.
[4] John viii. 43. [5] Job xxi. 14.

astonishment,—that the very mind of man,—the offspring of God, "the Paternal Mind," as a heathen called him,—that this most excellent part or power belonging to the nature of man, should be poisoned with malignity and envenomed with enmity against the glorious ever-blessed God; *that* the mind of man, his thinking power, the fountain of thoughts should be set against God, who gave him this *power to think!* Yet into this reason must every man's unacquaintance with God be resolved; they know not God and converse not with him, only because they have no mind to it. That noble faculty in man, that resembles the nature of God, is turned off from him and set on vain things that cannot profit; as also upon wicked and impure things, that render them more unlike to God and disaffected to him.

"By wicked works,"—which must have a double reference,—* we must understand * former wicked works, as done by them: future wicked works, as resolved on by them.

1. The former wicked works, which they have done, have more and more habituated their souls unto a state of distance from God. The longer they live, the longer they sin; and the longer they sin, the more they are confirmed in their enmity against God.

2. Future wicked works, as resolved on to be done. They purpose to live as they have done, and give themselves the same liberty in sin as before, and will not know God or be acquainted with him, lest they should be drawn off from their resolved sinful course. For the knowledge of God and a course of sin are inconsistent things. "Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God."[1] "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, but men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil."[2] They hate the light, because they will not have their course altered; they resolve to do as they have done; and that light which brings with it a tendency to the obeying of God, they cannot endure. But then, as this alienation of mind and enmity are against the light that

[1] 1 Cor. xv. 34. [2] John iii. 19.

reveals God, they finally terminate on the blessed God himself; as God is the term of reconciliation, so he is the term of this enmity and alienation. Wicked men look on God with enmity of mind, under several notions:

I. As he claims to be their Owner; when he claims a principal propriety in them, when he insists on his right in them as their Creator, as having made them out of nothing. When God owns or claims them as their Lord, that first signifies he is their Proprietor, or one to whom they belong; but they say, they are their own. If we have to do with God, we must quit claim to ourselves and look on God as our Owner; but this is fixed in the hearts of men, 'We will be our own; we will not consent to the claim which God makes to us. "Our lips are our own."'[1] Wicked men might as well say the same thing of their whole selves; our bodies, strength, time, parts, etc., are our own, and who is Lord over us?

II. If you consider God under the notion of a Ruler as well as an Owner. Why should not God rule over, and govern his own? But this the spirit of man can by no means comport withal, though it is but reasonable that he who gave men their beings should give them laws, and that he who gave life, should also give the rule of life; but this, man in his degenerate state will by no means admit of. There are two things considerable in the will of God, which the mind of man cannot comply withal. The sovereignty and the holiness of it.

The *sovereignty* of God's will. We must look on God's will as absolutely sovereign; man must look on God's will to be above his will; so as that man must cross his own will, to comport with a higher will than his. But this apostatized man will not do, and therefore he is at enmity with God; he will not submit to the will of God, as superior to his will. And then there is the *holiness* of God's will. His law is a holy law, and the renewed man therefore loves it; but because it is holy, therefore the unregenerate man dislikes it.

[1] Psa. xii. 4.

III. Lastly, God is considered under the notion of our end, our last end, as he is to be glorified and enjoyed by us. There is a disaffection to God in the hearts of unregenerate men, in this regard also. The spirit of man is opposite to living to the glory of God, everyone sets up for himself; 'I will be my own end, it shall be the business of my whole life to please myself.' Therefore, when God is represented as our end—as, "Whether ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God;"[1] and no man is to live to himself,[2] etc., the great design of our being delivered from the law, namely, as a cursing, condemning law, is that we may "live to God."[3] "I am dead to the law, that I might live unto God." This the unrenewed heart cannot comport with. The last and great design of all our actions must terminate on God; now self is set up, as the great idol in opposition to God, all the world over; and the spirits of men grow, by custom, more and more disaffected to God in this respect.

Again, God would be owned by us for our best good. This should be the sense of our souls towards him; so it was with the Psalmist: "Whom have I in heaven but thee?"[4] etc. but says the unregenerate soul, 'The world is better to me than God.' And it is upon this account, that when overtures are made of changing this state, the unregenerate mind opposes it.

Thus have you this doctrine explained and opened. I come now, in the second place,

Secondly. To evince the truth of this doctrine, and that by two heads of arguments; partly from ourselves and partly from God.

I. From ourselves. It is an alienation and enmity of mind, that keeps men off from God and reconciliation with him; which will plainly appear,

1. If we consider, that our minds are capable of knowing God: such a thing is the mind of man,—which was originally made for such an exercise,—as to be taken up principally with

[1] 1 Cor. x. 31. [2] 2 Cor. v. 15. [3] Gal. ii. 19. [4] Ps. lxxiii. 25.

things relating to God. Our minds can apprehend what is meant by the nature of God, as a Being of uncreated perfection, in whom all power, wisdom, and goodness do meet; who fills heaven and earth, and from everlasting was God. Our minds tell us, that we have a capacity thus to conceive of God; it is in the capacity of man's nature to mind God as well as to mind vanity, but doth it not. And whence doth this proceed but from enmity, an alienation of the mind from God?

2. This appears in that men are wilfully ignorant of God, and are destitute of the knowledge of him out of choice; ignorant, and are willing to be so. This speaks enmity and alienation of mind more expressly and fully: that they are capable of knowing God, and yet are ignorant of him, leaves no other cause assignable; but their desiring so to be, plainly assigns *this* cause, "They did not like to retain God in their knowledge."[1] It is not grateful to them. "We desire not the knowledge of thy ways."[2] Men are ignorant willingly of that God, who made the world and all things therein. "For this they are willingly ignorant,"[3] etc. They will not know God, though his visible works show his invisible power, and Godhead.[4] Now this can signify nothing but alienation and enmity of mind. Men are willing and industrious to know other things, and labour after the knowledge of them; but they decline the knowledge of God and his ways, being alienated from God, through "the blindness of their hearts."[5] This heart-blindness is chosen, and voluntary blindness signifies their having no mind or will to things of that nature.

But now the voluntariness of this ignorance of God, and the enmity that is consequently in it, appear evidently in two sorts of persons.

i. In many that are of the more knowing and inquisitive sort, who do all they can to make themselves notional atheists; to blot or raze the notion of God out of their minds. Of them

[1] Rom. i. 28. [2] Job xxi. 14. [3] 2 Pet. iii. 5. [4] Rom. i. 19, 20. [5] Ephes. iv. 18.

I shall say little *here;* they do their utmost, but in vain; it will stick as close to them as their thinking power. But their *attempt* shows their enmity, for they are content to admit the grossest absurdities into their minds rather than permit that notion to remain unmolested there; rather imagine such a curious frame of things as this world is, to have come by chance, than that it had a wise, just, holy, as well as powerful Maker. They would count it an absurdity, even unto madness, to think the exquisite picture of a man or a tree to have happened by chance; and can allow themselves to be so absurd as to think a man himself or a tree to be casual productions. Is not this the height of enmity!

ii. In the unthinking generality: of whom, yet unconverted out of the state of apostasy, it is said, "they are fools," as is the usual language of Scripture concerning wicked or unconverted men; and that *such* fools, though they never offer at saying in their minds, much less with their mouths, yet "they say in their hearts, no God," that is, not *there is none*, for there is no 'is' in the Hebrew text. The words may rather go in the optative form than the indicative: 'Oh that there were none!' The notion is let alone, while it reaches not their hearts; if it do, they only wish it were otherwise. This speaks their enmity the more, for the notion lays a continual testimony against the bent of their hearts, and constant practice; that while they own a God, they never fear nor love him accordingly. And they grossly misrepresent him, sometimes as all made up of mercy without justice or holiness, and so think they need no reconciliation to him; he and they are well agreed already: sometimes think of him as merciless and irreconcilable: and therefore never look after being reconciled to him.

3. It appears hence, that men do so seldom think of God; whenas a thought of God may be as soon thought as any other, and would cost us as little: why not as well on God as upon any of those vanities, about which they are commonly employed? It is a wonderful thing to consider, how man is capable of forming a thought; how a thought arises in our

minds: and how sad is it to consider, that though God hath given to men a thinking power, yet they will not think of Him! God hath given to man a mind that can think, and think on Him, as well as on anything else. My body cannot think, if my mind and spirit is gone; though God gave man the power of thought, yet men will not use or employ their thoughts otherwise than about vain or forbidden things. God forms the spirit of man within him, hath put an immortal spirit into him, whence a spring of thoughts might ascend heavenwards. When we have thousands of objects to choose of, we think of anything rather than God; and not only turn this way or that, besides him; but tend continually downwards, in opposition to him. Yea, men cannot endure to be put in mind of God; the serious mention of his name is distasteful. Whence can this proceed, that a thought of God cast in, is thrown out as fire from one's bosom; whence is it, but from the enmity of mind that is in man against God?

4. It further appears hence,—that men are so little concerned about the favour of God. Whomsoever we love, we naturally value their love; but whether God be a friend or an enemy, it is all one to the unrenewed soul, if there be no sensible effects of his displeasure. The men of this world only value its favours, the favour of God they value not; whereas "in his favour is life,"[1] in the account of holy and good men; yea, they judge "his loving-kindness is better than life"[2] without it. When men shall go from day to day, without considering whether God hath a favour for them or not; whether they are accepted or not, whether they have found grace in his eyes or not, etc.; what doth this declare, but an enmity of mind and alienation from God? If men had true love for God, it could not be but they would greatly value his love.

5. That men do so little converse and walk with God, doth speak a fixed alienation of mind and enmity against God. 'Walking with God' includes knowing and minding him; but

[1] Ps. xxx. 5. [2] Ps. lxiii. 3.

it adds all other motions of soul towards him, together with continuance and approving ourselves to him therein. Now agreement is required to walking with God: "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?"[1] Men walk not with God, because they are not come to an agreement with him; God's agreement with us and ours with him is that we may walk together. If we walk not with God, it is because there is no agreement; and what doth that import but an alienation of mind from God? Says God, 'I would not have you live in the world at so great a distance from me, I would walk with you, and have you walk with me; and for this end, I would come to an agreement with you.' But sinners will not come to any agreement with God, and thence it comes to pass that they walk not with God; they begin the day without God, walk all the day long without God, lie down at night without God; and the reason is because there is no agreement; and that denotes enmity: especially considering,

6. That daily converse with God would cost us nothing. To have any man's thoughts full of heaven, and full of holy fear and reverence of God, etc. (which is included in walking with God) what inconvenience is in this? what business will this hinder? When a man goes about his ordinary affairs, will it do any hurt to take God with him? No business will go on the worse for it; it will not detract from the success of our affairs. "Let every man, wherein he is called, therein abide with God."[2] Let your state be what it will, there can be no business in this world but what you may do *with* God as well as *without* God, and much better.

7. Which makes the matter yet plainer,—how uncomfortably do men live in this world, by reason of their distance from God and unacquaintedness with him! "But no one saith, Where is God my Maker, who giveth songs in the night."[3] They choose rather to groan under their burdens alone, than cry to God their Maker, as at the 9th verse of that chapter. When men will endure the greatest extremity

[1] Amos iii. 3. [2] 1 Cor. vii. 24. [3] Job xxxv. 10.

rather than apply themselves to God, what doth this resolve into but enmity against God?

8. That men do so universally disobey God, bespeaks alienation and enmity of mind. As obedience proceeds from love, so disobedience proceeds from enmity. And for this I shall only instance in two great precepts, wherein the mind and will of God is expressed, which I mention and insist upon, though briefly, as things that concern the constant and daily practice of every Christian: a course of prayer to God, in secret; and having our conversation in heaven.

How express are both of these precepts in the same chapter, the former, Matt. vi. 6, the latter, verses 19—21. Now consider, whether our disobedience to these two precepts do not discover great enmity in our hearts against God. What! to refuse to pray, and pour out our souls to him in secret? To refuse placing our treasure and our hearts in heaven? What doth this signify, but aversion and a disaffected heart?

Let us consider each of them severally and apart by itself.

We are a Christian assembly; how should it startle us to be, any of us, convicted of enmity against God, under the Christian name, in two so plain cases?

i. For prayer; it is a charge laid upon all persons, considered in their single and personal capacity. "But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret."[1] I fear that most of them who bear the Christian name, carry the matter so as if there were no such place in the Bible. When the mind and will of God is made known to us by his Son who came out of his bosom, that he will be sought unto, and that not only publicly, but secretly, and daily; that as we are taught, by our Lord himself, to pray for our daily bread and the forgiveness of our daily trespasses, we are also to "pray in secret, to him that sees in secret:" can such commands be constantly neglected and disobeyed, and not signify the contrary bent of our will, especially when we consider

[1] Matt. vi. 6.

that it is enjoined us for our own good? It would be profane to say, what profit is it to us to call upon the Almighty? But it is most justly to be said, what profit is it to the Almighty that we call upon him? It is honourable to him, but very profitable to ourselves. If we know not how to pray in a corner, confessing our sins and supplicating for mercy, we cannot but live miserable lives. When therefore this is not done, whence is it but from an enmity of mind? To a friend we can unbosom ourselves, not to an enemy.

I might also enlarge upon family prayer; but if closet prayer were seriously minded, you that have families would not dare to neglect prayer with them too. But if either be performed with coldness and indifferency, it makes the matter worse, or more plainly bad; and shows it is not love or any lively affection that puts you upon praying, but a frightened conscience only: and a miserably mistaken deluded one, that makes you think the God you pray to will be mocked or trifled with, or that cannot perceive whether your heart be with him or against him. And so instead of worshipping him, or giving him honour in that performance, you reproach and affront him; and all this while how vastly doth the temper of your mind disagree with the mind of God! 'I would,' saith the blessed God, 'have a course of prayer run through the whole course of your lives; and all this that your hearts may be lifted up from earth to heaven, that your hearts may be in heaven every day: "Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth; but treasures in heaven, etc. Where your treasure is there will your hearts be also."'[1] And so we are led to the other precept, mentioned before.

ii. As to a heavenly conversation; God would not have reasonable creatures, who have intelligent spirits about them, to grovel and crawl like worms in the dust of this lower world, as if they had no nobler sort of objects to converse with, than the things of this earth; nothing fitter for the contemplation, exercise, and enjoyment of an immortal mind. The saints are finally designed for "an inheritance in light,"

[1] According to Matt. vi. 19.

and their thoughts and affections ought to be there beforehand, that they may become "meet for that inheritance."[1] Will it do a man any harm to have frequent forethoughts of the everlasting joy, purity, and bliss of the heavenly state? How joyous and pleasant must it be! And why are we called Christians, if He who is our Lord and teacher, revealing his mind to us, and expressly charging us to "seek first the kingdom of God, to set our affections on the things above," etc., shall not be regarded? Why is not heaven every day in our thoughts? Why will we lose the pleasure of a heavenly life, and exchange it for earthly care and trouble, or vanity, at the best? Why is it? no other reason can be given, but only an alienation of our minds from God.

9. Another argument to prove this alienation, and enmity against God, is the unsuccessfulness of the gospel; which can be resolvable into nothing else but such an enmity. The design of the gospel is to bring us into a union with the Son of God, and to believe on him whom the Father hath sent. Christ seeks to gather in souls to God, but they will not be gathered. This is matter of fearful consideration, that when God is calling after men by his own Son, there be so few that will come to him. How few are there that say, 'Give me Christ, or I am lost! None can reconcile me to God, but Christ!' You are daily besought, in Christ's stead, to be reconciled,[2] but in vain! What doth this signify, but obstinate, invincible enmity?

II. Another head of arguments may be taken from several considerations, that we may have of *God* in this matter; whence it will appear that nothing but enmity, on our parts, keeps us at that distance from God as we generally are at: and consider to that purpose,

1. That God is the God of all grace, the fountain of goodness, the element of love. Why are men at that distance from him who is goodness, and grace, and love itself? The reason is not on God's part. "God is love; and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him."[3] What

[1] Col. i. 12. [2] 2 Cor. v. 20. [3] 1 John iv. 16.

can our so great distance from this God signify, from the most perfect, the most excellent goodness, but the most horrid kind and the highest pitch of enmity? Did men apprehend this, what frightful monsters would they appear to themselves! This is not only a plain, but a terrible declaration of a most unaccountable enmity, on our part.

2. God is still pleased to continue our race on earth, a succession of men in this world from age to age, made after his own image, with minds and spirits that are intelligent and immortal; which declares a strong propension in God towards such a sort of creatures, the inhabitants of this lower world, though degenerated and fallen from him. Notwithstanding all their neglect of him in former ages, yet new generations of men still spring up, capable of knowing and serving him. In the foreseen height of man's enmity, this was the steady bent of his mind towards them,—to "rejoice in the habitable parts of this earth," and to "have his delights with the sons of men."[1] Thus also do we find Solomon in a rapture of admiration on this account: "But will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth?"[2] etc. And the Psalmist: that "gifts are given to the rebellious,"—the most insolent of enemies,—"that the Lord God might dwell among them."[3] How admirable and inconceivable a wonder is this! "The heaven of heavens cannot contain him, and will he yet dwell with men on earth?" And we yet find, notwithstanding God's great condescension, that there is still a distance; whence can this be, but from man's aversion and enmity of mind against God? Thus are men still requiting God evil for his goodness; God will dwell with men on earth, but men will not dwell with him, nor admit of his dwelling with them; they say to him, "Depart from us."[4] It is thus from age to age and generation to generation, which shows God's goodness on his part and the enmity on man's part. See to this purpose, Psalm xiv. and liii., the beginning of each.

3. Consider the forbearance of God towards you, while you

[1] Prov. viii. 31. [2] 2 Chron. vi. 18. [3] Ps. lxviii. 18. [4] Job xxi. 14.

are continually at his mercy. With what patience doth he spare you, though your own hearts must tell you that you are offending creatures, and whom he can destroy in a moment! He spares you, that neglect him. "He is not willing that you should perish, but come to the knowledge of the truth, that you may be saved;" by which he calls and leads you to repentance.[1] On God's part, here is a kind intention; but on man's part, nothing but persevering enmity.

4. Consider God's large and wonderful bounty towards the children of men in this world, and the design of it. "He giveth to all life, and breath, and all things, that they might seek after him."[2] "He daily loadeth us with benefits."[3] "He gives us all things richly to enjoy." God leaves not himself without witness, that he doth men good.[4] He gives men rain from heaven, when they want it; and, when unseasonable, he withholds it. It is a great thing to understand "the loving kindness of the Lord, his wonderful works towards the children of men;"[5] to understand our mercies and comforts, and what their meaning and design is. By mercies to our outward man, God designs to draw our hearts and minds to himself. Mercies are bestowed on them that have the power of thought, to consider the end of all God's mercies; it is bespeaking, and seeking to win our hearts to himself. It is drawing us with those "cords of a man, with bands of love;"[6] which plainly shows what the case requires,—that the minds and hearts of men are very averse and alienated from him, and therefore need such drawing.

5. And that which is more than all the rest is God's sending his Son into the world, to procure terms of peace for us, and then to treat with us thereupon; and that in him he is "reconciling the world unto Himself."[7] Doth not reconciliation suppose enmity? as here, and in the text: "You that were enemies in your minds.... yet hath he reconciled." As we have noted that on our parts our withstanding and too commonly frustrating his overtures, speaks enmity and obsti-

[1] Rom. ii. 4. [2] Acts xvii. 25, 26. [3] Ps. lxviii. 19.
[4] Acts xiv. 17. [5] Ps. cvii. 15. [6] Hos. xi. 4. [7] 2 Cor. v. 19.

nacy therein; so on his part those overtures themselves speak it too. Here is the greatest kindness and good will on God's part, that can be conceived; but it supposes, what we are evincing, ill will in us. Christ "came to seek and save that which was lost." What a lost state was our state! What! to be engaged in a war against him that made us? "Woe unto him that strives with his Maker."[1] Fallen man is little apprehensive of it now; if we continue unreconciled to the last, at death it will be understood what a lost state we are in. Upon this account it will then *appear;* but this was our state before, when it appeared *not.* In this state Christ pitied us, when we had no pity for ourselves. Christ came not into the world to save men, only at the hour of their death, from hell; but to raise up to himself a willing people that may serve and glorify God in their life on earth. He is for this purpose intent on this reconciling design; and how earnest, how alluring were his solicitations in the days of his flesh! "Come to me, all ye that are weary . . . He that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out." How pathetical his lamentations for the unreconcilable! "Oh that thou hadst known the things belonging to thy peace . . ." And his blood was shed at last, as the blood of propitiation, of a reconciling sacrifice, to reconcile God's justice to us; and thereupon also, as in this context, "having made peace by the blood of his cross,"[2] to vanquish our enmity, "to reconcile us who were enemies in our minds . . ."[3]

6. Consider Christ sending, and continuing from age to age, the gospel in the world; the design whereof may be understood by the manifest import and substance of it, and by the titles given to it: as it reveals Christ, the Mediator, the Peacemaker, in his person, natures, offices, acts, sufferings, and performances: as it contains the great commands of "Repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ," with the promises of pardon, and eternal life, with whatsoever is requisite to our present good state Godward, and our final blessedness in him: as also the various enforce-

[1] Isa. xlv. 9. [2] Col. i. 20. [3] Col. i. 21, 22.

ments of such precepts, and confirmations of such promises, with copious explications of the one and the other: and as it is called the "ministry of reconciliation;"[1] "the word" wherein peace is preached, "by Jesus Christ;"[2] "the gospel of peace, and of glad tidings,"[3]—as that very word *gospel* signifies.

This gospel was, in its clearer manifestation at the fulness of time, introduced with great magnificence and solemnity into the world, as the law had been by the ministry of angels. When the Sun of righteousness, the light of the world, was arising and dawning upon it; then did a multitude of the heavenly host appear, praising God, and saying: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."[4]

But this gospel is not a more express declaration of God's good will towards men, than their deportment under it,—their continuing to live as without God in the world,—is of their ill-will, disaffection, and enmity against God.

7. And lastly, the strivings of the Spirit in the hearts of ministers preaching the gospel and with the souls of men to whom it is preached, show that there is a mighty enmity to be overcome.

i. God's giving forth his Spirit to ministers, enabling them to strive with sinners, to bring them to Christ, according to the working of that power, which works in them mightily:[5] what *need* of such striving, but that there is a great enmity in the minds of people to be conquered and overcome? Sometimes we read of ministers of the gospel weeping over souls, who, for their too intent "minding of earthly things," are called "enemies to the cross of Christ:"[6] sometimes they are ready to breathe out their own souls towards them among whom they labour:[7] sometimes represented as "travailing in birth" with them that are committed to their charge.[8] There are ministers, whose hearts are in pangs and agonies for the souls of sinners, when the things of God are too apparently

[1] 2 Cor. v. 18. [2] Acts x. 36. [3] Rom. x. 15. [4] Luke ii. 13, 14.
[5] Col. i. 29. [6] Phil. iii. 18. [7] 1 Thess. ii. 8. [8] Gal. iv. 19.

neglected, and not regarded by them; and when they see "destruction from the Almighty is not a terror to them;" and while they visibly take "the way that takes hold of hell, and leads down to the chambers of death." They would, if possible, "save them with fear," and pluck them as firebrands out of the fire,—the fire of their own lusts and fervent enmity against God and godliness,—and save them from his flaming wrath. Is all this unnecessary? and what makes it necessary, but that there is a counter-striving,—an enmity working in the hearts of men against the Spirit's striving in the ministry,—to be overcome?

ii. The Spirit also strives immediately with the souls of sinners, and pleads with them; sometimes as a Spirit of conviction, illumination, fear and dread; sometimes as a Spirit of grace, wooing and beseeching; and when his motions are not complied with, there are complaints of men's grieving, vexing, quenching, resisting the Spirit:[1] which resistance implies continual striving. No striving but doth suppose an obstruction and difficulty to be striven withal; there could be no resisting, if there were not counter-striving; and hereby despite is done to the Spirit of grace. O fearful aggravation, that such a Spirit is striven against! It is the Spirit of grace, love, and goodness, the Spirit of all kindness, sweetness, and benignity which a wicked man doth despite unto.[2] How vile and horrid a thing to requite grace, love, and sweetness, with spite; as if the sinner should say, 'Thou wouldst turn me to God, but I will not be turned!' The blessed God says: "Turn you at my reproof, . . . I will pour out my Spirit unto you."[3] There are preventive insinuations, upon which, if we essay to turn, plentiful effusions of the Spirit may be hoped to ensue; for he is the Spirit of grace. When we draw back, and resist or slight those foregoing good motions of that Holy Spirit,—this is despiting him. And doth not this import enmity in a high degree,—that the Spirit needs strive so much that it may be overcome? as with some, at his own pleasure, he doth: with

[1] Acts vii. 51. [2] Heb. x. 29. [3] Prov. i. 23.

others, in just displeasure, he strives no more, and so it is never overcome.

Thirdly. We come now to the application, wherein the subject would admit and require a very abundant enlargement, if we were not within necessary limits.

Two things I shall take notice of, as very necessary to be remarked, and most amazingly strange and wonderful, by way of introduction to some further use:

I. That ever the spirit of man,—a reasonable, intelligent being, God's own offspring, and whereto he is not only a Maker, but a Parent, styled the Father of spirits,—should be degenerated into so horrid, so unnatural a monster! What! to be a hater of God? the most excellent, and all-comprehending Good? and thy own Father? "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, saith the Lord, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me."[1] "Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this! and be horribly afraid! be ye very desolate!" As if all the blessed inhabitants of that upper world should rather forsake their glorious mansions, leave heaven empty, and run back into their original nothing, than endure such a sight! An intelligent spirit, hating God, is the most frightful prodigy in universal nature! If all men's limbs were distorted, and their whole outer man transformed into the most hideous shapes, it were a trifle in comparison with this deformity of the soul.

II. That it should be thus, and they never regret nor perceive it! What self-loathing creatures would men be, could they see themselves; so as never to endure themselves, while they find they do not love God! But men are generally well pleased with themselves for all this. Though the case is so plain, they will not see it; when all the mentioned indications show it, they never charge or suspect themselves of such a thing as this enmity against God! God charges them,—and doth he not know them?—the Pagan world, that they are "God-haters;"[2] even with a *hellish* hatred, as the word there signifies. They that profess his name are apt to admit this

[1] Isa. i. 2.

[2] θεοστυγεῖς, Rom. i. 30.

true of the *Gentiles;* but do we think our Lord Jesus did injuriously accuse the Jews too, that "they had both seen and hated both him and his Father?"[1] How remote was it from a Jew, (who boasted themselves God's peculiar people,) to think himself a hater of God! And what were they, of whom He says by the prophet: "My soul loathed them, and their soul abhorred me;" which is presupposed,[2] and most justly; for can there be a more loathsome thing than to abhor goodness itself? What! the most perfect benignity? And those Cretans had received the Christian faith, whom the apostle exhorts Titus to rebuke sharply,—that they might be "*found* in it;" and of whom he says, that "professing to know God, in works they denied him, being abominable."[3] Hence is our labour lost in beseeching men to be reconciled to God, while they own no enmity.

Since this matter is so evident, that this is the temper of the unconverted world Godward; that they are "alienated from him, and enemies in their minds" toward him, by wicked works; it is then beyond all expression strange, that they never observe it in themselves (as the toad is not offended at its own poisonous nature) and are hereupon apt to think that God observes it not, nor is displeased with them for it.

It is strange they should not observe it in themselves, upon so manifold evidence. Do but recount with yourselves and run over the several heads of evidence that have been given. Can you deny you have minds capable of knowing God? Cannot you conceive of wisdom, power, goodness, truth, justice, holiness; and that these may be either more manifest or in more excellent degrees, even among creatures, in some creatures more than in others; but that Being, in which they are in the highest and most absolute perfection, must be God? Can you deny that you have lived in great ignorance of God, much of your time; that your ignorance was voluntary, having such means of knowing him, as you have had? That you have usually been thoughtless and unmindful of him in your ordinary course? That the thoughts of him

[1] John xv. 24. [2] Zech. xi. 8. [3] Titus i. 16.

have been ungrateful, and very little welcome or pleasant to you? That you have had little converse with him, little trust, reverence, delight, or expectation placed on him as the object? That you have not been wont to concern him in your affairs, to consult him, to desire his concurrence? That you have not thought of approving yourself to him in your designs and actions, but lived as "without him in the world?" That you have not designed the pleasing or obeying of him in the course of your conversation? That the gospel, under which you have lived, hath had little effect upon you, to alter the temper of your spirits towards him? That if his Spirit hath sometimes awakened you, raised some fear or some desires now and then in your souls, you have suppressed, and stifled, and striven against such motions? Do not these things, together, discover an enmity against God and the ways of God? And is it not strange you cannot see this, and perceive a disaffection to God by all this in yourselves? What is so near a man as himself? Have you not in you a reflecting power? "Know ye not your own selves?" as the apostle speaks.[1] Yea, generally, men never find fault with themselves, upon any such account; and consequently, think themselves in such respects very innocent in the sight of God, and think he finds no fault with them!

Now these two things being premised, will make way for the following uses. We infer therefore,

1. That whereas it so evidently appears that men are at enmity with God, it cannot but be consequent that God is not well pleased with them.

No one is well pleased to have another hate him. God discerns *that* in the inward temper of men's minds wherewith he is not well pleased; namely, this alienation of mind from him, this wicked enmity, that is so generally found in them. They are wont to make light of secret, internal sin: the ill posture of their minds they think a harmless innocent thing. But this he remonstrates against; takes notice of with dislike and displeasure; and is counterworking this spirit of

[1] 2 Cor. xiii. 5.

enmity, not only by his word, but by his Spirit of love and power. Though he doth not testify his displeasure by flames and thunderbolts, yet he observes, and approves not, the course and current of their thoughts and affections. Though he permit them,—sometimes without sensible rebuke,—to run on long in their contempt of him; yet he declares it to be wickedness: The wicked have not "God in all their thoughts."[1] He expostulates about it: "Wherefore do the wicked contemn God?"[2] threatens them with hell, for their forgetting him;[3] yet sinners are apt to conclude that God doth not see or disallow anything of that kind.[4] How unapt are they to admit any conviction of heart-wickedness, though it is more than intimated to be destructive! "Wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved;"[5] as much as to say, 'thou art lost if thy heart be not purged.' Yea, when it is so plain in itself that enmity against God, which hath its seat in the heart, makes a man's soul a very hell, yet they seem to think themselves very innocent creatures, when they are as much devilized as a mind dwelling in flesh can be! This is the common practical error and mistake men lie under, that they think God takes notice of no evil in them, but what other men can observe and reproach them for. But he knows the inward bent and inclination of their minds and spirits,—why else is he called the "heart-searching God?"—and knows that this is the principal and most horrid wickedness that is to be found among the children of men,—an alienated mind from God; and the root of all the rest. The fountain of wickedness is within a man. Simon Magus' wickedness lay in his thought; it is said to him: "Repent of this thy wickedness, and pray that the thought of thy heart may be forgiven thee."[6] And when the prophet exhorts, (as before),[7] "to wash the heart from wickedness," he adds: "how long shall vain thoughts lodge within thee?" And our Saviour tells us: "Out of the heart" first "proceed evil thoughts;" and then all the other

[1] Ps. x. 4. [2] Ver. 13. [3] Ps. ix. 17. [4] Ps. xciv. 7.
[5] Jer. iv. 14. [6] Acts viii. 22. [7] Jer. iv. 14.

wickednesses, after mentioned,—"murders, adulteries,"[1] etc. And that enmity and alienation of mind that turns off the whole current of a man's thoughts from God, is the original evil; and, by consequence, lets them loose to everything else that offends Him and ruins themselves. Yet when their very hearts are such a hell of wickedness (as what is more hellish than enmity against God) they are notwithstanding wont to say they have good hearts.

2. Hence see the absolute necessity of regeneration,—a doctrine at which most men do wonder; which our Saviour intimates when he says, "Marvel not" at it; namely, that "I said ye must be born again."[2] But who may not now apprehend a necessity of being regenerate? What will become of thee, if thou diest with such a disaffected mind Godward? Do but suppose your soul going out of the body in this temper; full of disaffection towards the ever-blessed God, before whose bright glory and flaming majesty (to thee a consuming fire) thou must now appear, though most unwilling, and as full of horror and amazing dread! How will thine heart then meditate terror, and say within thee, 'This is the God I could never love! whom I would never know! to whom I was always a willing stranger! whose admirable grace never allured or won my heart! who in a day of grace, that is now over with me, offered me free pardon and reconciliation, but I was never at leisure to regard it. The love of this world, which I might have known to be enmity against God, had otherwise engaged me. It hath been the constant language of my heart to him, "Depart from me;' for I desire not the knowledge of thy ways;" I must now hear from him that just and terrible voice, even by the mouth of the only Redeemer and Saviour of sinners, "Depart from me, I know thee not." And into how horrid society must I now go! "The things that eye hath not seen, nor ear heard," more glorious things than "ever entered into the heart," are all prepared for lover of God. And for whom can everlasting "fire be prepared,

[1] Matt. xv. 19. [2] John iii. 7.

but for the devil and his angels," and such other accursed God-haters, as I have been.'[1]

Recollect yourselves, consider the present posture and temper of your souls, and what your way and course is. You care not to come nigh to God now; but love to live at a distance from him, through enmity against him; from whence proceeds your departing from him, and saying to him, "Depart from us." But another day, you will have enough of departing from God; a wicked man's life is nothing else but a continual forsaking of God or departing from him. I appeal to your own hearts concerning the justice of that mentioned repartee: "They say now" to God, "Depart from us,"[2] and God will then say to them, "Depart from me."[3] That man's soul must thus perish that lives and dies at enmity with God. Regeneration slays this enmity, and implants in the soul divine love. Therefore we must be regenerate, or we "cannot enter into the kingdom of God."[4] A man must have a new heart and a new spirit created in him, in which heart and spirit the love of God is the reigning principle. And therefore I repeat to you, "the things which eye hath not seen" and "a crown of life" are prepared and "promised to them that love him."[5] You may yourselves collect the rest.

3. Hence take notice of the seat and subject of this regeneration and change. It is the *mind* of man; for "you were enemies, in your *minds*, by wicked works." We are to be "renewed, in the spirit of our minds,"[6] to be "transformed, by the renewing of our minds,"[7] etc. You that have not considered what regeneration is,—I tell you, it is to have your minds altered and changed; that whereas you did not mind God or Christ, your minds being changed, you savour and delight in the things of God, "They that are after the flesh, savour the things of the flesh." "The carnal mind is enmity against God."[8] It is the mind, therefore, not as

[1] Matt. xxv. 41. [2] Job xxi. 14. [3] Matt. xxv. 41.
[4] John iii. 3, 5. [5] 1 Cor. ii. 9; James i. 12. [6] Eph. iv. 23.
[7] Rom. xii. 2. [8] Rom. viii. 5, 7.

speculative merely, but as practical and active, that must be renewed. Inquire therefore,—what change do you find in your minds? Are you in mind and spirit more holy, spiritual, and serious? And are your minds more delightfully taken up with the things of God than formerly? Till your minds are thus changed, they cannot be towards God; but will be perpetually full of enmity against God. You will only mind earthly things,[1] with the neglect of God, and heaven, and heavenly things. If ever the gospel doth us good, it must be by the change of our minds.

4. And in the last place; hence understand the absolute necessity of reconciliation with God, because you have been alienated, and enemies against him, by wicked works. Regeneration cures in part your enmity, but makes no atonement for your guilt in having been enemies; for this you need a reconciler, that could satisfy for you. What will become of the man that is not reconciled to God? If you be God's enemy, can he be your friend? And if God be your enemy, he is the most terrible enemy. How can we lie down in peace, in an unreconciled state? or without knowing whether we are reconciled or not? Let not the sun go down this day, and leave you at enmity with God. If you have fallen out with a man, the "sun is not to go down on your wrath;" and is your enmity against God a juster or more tolerable thing? Oh let not the sun go down before you have made your peace!

And for your encouragement, consider that it is the office of the Son of God to reconcile you to him. He is the reconciler, the peacemaker, the maker-up of breaches between God and man. He is, if you resist not, ready by his Spirit to remove the enmity that lies in your minds against God; and, by his blood, he causes Divine justice to be at peace with you. If you find the former effect, that assures you of the latter. Bless God that he hath provided and given you notice of such a reconciler. "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself."[2] Bless God that he hath sent, and

[1] Phil. iii. 19, 20.

[2] 2 Cor. v. 19.

settled one among you, on this errand, "to beseech you to be reconciled to God."[1] "Blessed is the man whose iniquities are forgiven;" and blessed is the man who can say, 'I was once an enemy, but now am I reconciled; formerly I saw no need of Christ, but now I cannot live without him.' How fearful a thing will it be to die unreconciled to God under a gospel of reconciliation! While the voice of the gospel of grace is calling upon you, "Return and live; turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?" beware of dying unreconciled under such a gospel.

When you return hence, retire into a corner, and consider what a wicked enmity of mind you have had against God and Christ; and pray that you may be renewed in the spirit of your mind.[2] Let a holy resolution be taken up at last, after many neglects, as was by the poor distressed prodigal after he had long lived a wandering life: "I will arise, and go to my father,"[3] etc., and you will find God a merciful father, ready to receive you, and with joy! O the joyful meeting between a returning soul and a sin-pardoning God! When once your strangeness and your enmity are overcome, and you are come into a state of amity and friendship with God; then will the rest of your time be pleasantly spent in a holy, humble walking with God, under the conduct of grace, till you come eternally to enjoy him in glory.

[1] 2 Cor. v. 20. [2] Eph. iv. 23. [3] Luke xv. 18, and onward.

DISCOURSE II.

OF RECONCILIATION BETWEEN GOD AND MAN.

COLOSSIANS i. 21, 22.

"AND YOU, THAT WERE SOMETIME ALIENATED AND ENEMIES IN YOUR MIND BY WICKED WORKS, YET NOW HATH HE RECONCILED IN THE BODY OF HIS FLESH THROUGH DEATH," ETC.

We have, from the former words of this text, shown the fearful, horrid state of unconverted sinners; that, as such, they are "alienated, and enemies in their mind by wicked works," and come now to show, from the words that follow, the blessed state of the converted: "Yet now, hath he reconciled," etc.

Here is instance given of the happiest change that ever was made in the case of sinful wretched creatures; and far above all our expectations, if we had not been told that as far as the heavens are above the earth, so far, in acts of mercy, are God's ways above our ways, and his thoughts above our thoughts.[1]

Otherwise, when we hear of a sort of creatures that were fallen from God and gone into rebellion against him; that were alienated, and enemies to him in their minds, by wicked works; one would be in suspense, and say, 'Well, and what became of the business? how did it issue? what was the event?' and would expect to hear, 'Why fire came down from heaven upon them, and consumed them in a moment; or the

[1] Isa. lv. 9.

earth opened, and swallowed them up quick.' Yea, and if the matter were so reported to us, if we did hear fire and brimstone, flames and thunderbolts immediately came down upon them and destroyed them in a moment; who would not say, 'So I thought; who could expect other?'

But that it should be said, such as were alienated from God, and his very "enemies in their mind, by wicked works," those hath his own Son "reconciled,"—into what a transport of wonder and praises would this cast any considering mind! with what amazement would it make us cry out, Oh what hath God wrought! what wonders can the power of Divine grace bring about! How unexpected, how surprising a thing is this!

Especially when we also consider *how* this was brought to pass; the Son of God effected it "in the body of his own flesh, through death." He died for it! Rather than such impure venomous worms, and that were as weak and defenceless as they were vile and wicked, should at last suffer the dreadful consequences of so desperate and unequal a war against the Almighty,—which could not be other than their own ruin and eternal death,—he chose himself to die for them.

This is the strange amazing subject we have to consider: and we cannot but confess and consider it as a strange thing, if we were only told it as that which had fallen out in some other country, in any remote part of the world, or in some *other* world.

But when we understand, as for the *former* part, this is the common case of men on earth,—and therefore that it was our *own* case,—to have "been alienated from God, and enemies to him in our minds by wicked works;" and as to the *latter* part, that to *us* the proposal and offer is made of being reconciled in this strange way,—in what agonies, in what consternation of spirit should we be, when we can with greatest certainty say the former, if we cannot say the latter! And if we can, in what a transport, in what raptures of admiration, joy, and praise, should we say it; any of us who hath heard or now reads these words, 'Even

me, who was alienated, and an enemy in my mind, by wicked works, yet *me* now hath he reconciled!' Can you say so? how should your heart leap and spring within you at the reciting of these words! And if you cannot as yet say this with particular application, and it does not therefore raise a present joy, yet it may beget hope in you; for think with yourself 'If with some the matter hath been brought to this blessed issue, why may it not with me?' And upon the one account or the other, now set yourself seriously to consider these latter words.

And that you may do so with the more advantage, take distinct notice of these two things, that are to be severally treated of; first, Of this blessed work itself, brought about by your merciful and glorious Redeemer: Reconciliation with God; "You hath he reconciled." Secondly, The wonderful way wherein he hath effected it: "In the body of his flesh, through death."

First, Consider this reconciliation itself; which that we may do with just advantage, both to the truth and ourselves, we must take heed of too much narrowing so important a subject, but take it in its due extent and compass, as comprehending all that truly belongs to it; and so it must be understood to be mutual between God and us, and to include both: our reconciliation to him, and his reconciliation to us. Thus the proper import of the word, the scope of the apostle's present discourse, and the nature of the thing lead us to understand it.

The word being used, when two parties have been at variance, not only signifies the laying down of enmity on the one side, but to be received into grace and favour on the other; as might be shown of the original words that are wont to be thus rendered, if it were needful or at this time fit. But it sufficiently appears in the common use of this way of speaking among ourselves.

And if we consider the scope of the apostle's discourse, nothing can be more agreeable to it; which is manifestly to exalt and magnify Christ, first, as Creator, affirming that

"all things visible and invisible were made by him, and for him;"[1] and then afterwards—there having been a rupture and breach in the creation by the apostasy and revolt of some creatures; others also, being in an uncertain and mutable state, liable to a like failure and defection—he is further magnified as the reconciler of such as were thought fit to be restored, and the establisher of such as stood.[2]

Now the representation of his performance as a reconciler had been very imperfect, if he had designed therein only to signify a reconciliation effected by him on one side, leaving the other unreconciled.

And though it be true, that taking this reconciliation in reference to the immediately foregoing words of this verse,—"you that were enemies,"—might seem to limit it to that one sense, as if it meant only reconciliation on our part, consisting in the laying down of our enmity; yet the following words, that show how this reconciliation is brought about,—"in the body of his flesh through death,"—signify as much for the extending of it to the other reconciliation also; namely, on God's part towards us. For they plainly mean that this reconciliation is brought about by *sacrifice;* namely, by our Lord Jesus' offering himself upon the cross for us, as hereafter we shall have occasion more largely to show. Now a sacrifice is offered to God only, not to men, and being for reconciliation, must principally and in the first place intend the reconciling of God to us, though it secondarily hath its great use for the reconciling us to God also; as hereafter we shall show.

And it is in the nature of the thing very evident; reconciliation supposing a difference and displeasure between two parties as what hath been, it must include the agreement of both as that which *now is.*

A willingness to be reconciled there may be on one side, when there is none on the other, as it is often and long between God and men; but if there be actual reconciliation, it is always mutual, unless the one party deceive or impose

[1] Col. i. 16. [2] Ver. 17.

upon the other, pretending to be reconciled when he is not: which, in the case between God and us can never be; for neither can we deceive God, nor will he deceive us.

Therefore we shall treat of both the parts of this reconciliation, of men to God, and of God to them.

I. Our reconciliation to God. And though that be proposed to be first insisted on, let none think it is therefore looked upon as *deserving*, or as being any way a cause of, his reconciliation to us. For as our enmity and rebellion against him cannot do him real hurt, though it does him infinite wrong; so our love and obedience, though they are most due to him, can profit him nothing. "Can a man be profitable unto God, as he that is wise may be profitable unto himself?" is it a gain to him, if we be righteous?[1] What givest thou him? or what receiveth he of thine hand? Thy wickedness may hurt a man, as thou art, and thy righteousness may profit a son of man.[2] But by neither can we do the one or other to him. It should therefore be far from us to imagine we can procure his favour or reconciliation by anything we can do.

And know, sinner, he is beforehand with thee in the offer of reconciliation and in real willingness to be reconciled; for his offer is most sincere. When therefore out of a state of enmity, thou art brought to love him, it is because he loved thee first.[3]

But take this aright, that thou mayest not deceive thyself nor wrong him. Before our reconciliation to him, his gospel truly speaks him reconcilable and offering us reconciliation; when his offer is accepted and complied with, then his gospel speaks him actually reconciled. His offer of reconciliation shows his compassion, which is love to the miserable; herein he is beforehand with them whom he finally saves; he loves them with this love while they yet hate him and are full of enmity against him. From this love it is that he is reconcilable to them, willing to forgive all their former enmity and rebellions; if yet they will be reconciled, and turn to

[1] Job xxii. 2, 3. [2] Chap. xxxv. 7, 8. [3] 1 John iv. 19.

him with their whole souls. And this he testifies to them in his gospel; and hereby his Spirit, working in and by this gospel of his grace, he overcomes them, conquers their enmity, and causes them to love him whom before they hated.

But this actual reconciliation is always accompanied with *delight;* which is love to the amiable, such as he hath now made lovely, by transforming them into his own image, "who is love."[1] This is friendly complacential love, that freely converses and holds communion with the beloved, so that "they dwell in him, and he in them,"—as in the same place.

It is profane therefore, and an insolent presumption for any to say, 'God is reconciled to me, he delights and takes pleasure in me,' while they are unreconciled to him and have hearts full of wicked enmity against him. They do even "weary him with their words, when they say, everyone that doth evil is good in the sight of the Lord, and he delighteth in them."[2] It is an affront to his excellent majesty, a reproach to his glorious holiness and the purity of his nature, a defiance to the justice of his government,—to think him well pleased, when they persist in their rebellions against him; or that he will be reconciled to them, when this is still the temper and posture of their souls towards him. "He is not a God that takes pleasure in wickedness, nor shall evil dwell with him; he hates the workers of iniquity."[3] Any such thought he will severely and terribly avenge. "If any man bless himself in his heart, and say, I shall have peace, when he walks in the imagination of his heart...God will not spare him, but the anger of the Lord and his jealousy shall smoke against that man."[4]

And it is, on the other hand, a wicked, provoking unbelief, a high affront to him, a giving him the lie, if one, really willing to be reconciled, do apprehend him irreconcilable; or say in his heart, 'God will never show me mercy.' It is as much as to say that the word of his grace is nothing but deceit, and his whole gospel is made up of falsehood.

[1] 1 John iv. 16. [2] Mal. ii. 17. [3] Ps. v. 4, 5. [4] Deut. xxix. 19, 20.

Therefore though our reconciliation to him is no cause of his reconciliation to us, yet, according to the method which he hath settled as most agreeable to his glorious majesty, to his pure holiness, his hatred of sin, the justice of his government and the truth of his word, we cannot say he is actually reconciled to us, till we are reconciled to him. It may be said he pities us before, and is upon gospel-terms reconcilable to us; not that he delights in us or is reconciled.

And we may the better understand this,—that our reconciliation is no cause of his reconciliation to us, though it go before it,—inasmuch as he works *both* reconciliations in and by his Christ; so the text speaks of both: "You hath *he* reconciled"—not we ourselves. "All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ,"[1] but in this way, order, and method,—that first he overcomes our enmity, changes our hearts, and turns them to him; then is reconciled to us as believing in his Son, and accepts us in him as "the beloved one."

Hereupon therefore we are first to consider, and open to you, our reconciliation to God; which we shall consider and speak of, not merely by showing the very point wherein it lies; but more largely, by letting you see what it comprehends in the compass of it, or what belongs to it and in what way it is brought about.

We are indeed to consider that this in the text, "you hath he reconciled" is an *historical* passage, signifying somewhat past, a *res gesta*, a great thing effected and done. Whereas therefore some have taken much pains (and not to ill purpose) to write histories of nature, and give account of natural productions; we may call this a history of grace, giving some account how this gracious production is effected and wrought on the souls of men. And for you that are reconciled, it is but to repeat to you your own story, and show you what God hath done for your soul in this blessed work. We might have carried the same notion backward, and in the former part have considered your case as the history of a

[1] 2 Cor. v. 18.

man's unregenerate state; but those days, I believe, you would rather should not be "numbered amongst the months." We therefore go on, to consider what will be of a more grateful as well as most useful remembrance to you; namely, how God hath dealt with you in bringing about this happy change.

And doing it, in some sort, in the way of a history, it will be the more suitable to put you in mind, in diverse particulars, of the manner how it was wrought; it being usual, in historical relations, not only in short to say that such a thing was done, but more at large to relate how and in what way it was done: though yet we cannot certainly say that the several things we shall mention were all done in that order wherein we shall set them down; for God's method may vary, or not in every respect be the same, with every one he savingly works upon. But because there are several things to be spoken, which cannot all be mentioned at once or in one breath, and some order or other must be used in reciting them; we shall repeat them, not merely as they occur to our thoughts, but also as they more aptly lie in order to one another; not doubting but if you have been reconciled to God, you will say, when you hear them, these things have been wrought in you: or if you have not, I must say these are things you are to look after, and must at one time find in yourselves, if ever you shall be reconciled. And so this reconciliation hath begun with you, or must begin in,

1. A thorough conviction, with deep and inward sense wrought into your hearts, of your former enmity. There must have been a charging one's self, particularly, with this matter of fact: 'I have been alienated from God, and an enemy to him in my mind; I see it, I confess it, thus it hath been with me, this hath been the temper of my soul towards the blessed God!'

Here lies the great difficulty of reconciliation on our part, that men are so hardly brought to see and own this; because they feel not an enmity boiling in their hearts against God, therefore they will not yield there is any such thing. But

they might take notice they as little feel love burning in their breasts towards him. And they the less apprehend the truth of their case in this respect, because by the same external show and appearance by which they may deceive other men, they endeavour to cheat themselves too; that is, because they sometimes bear a part in the solemnities of God's worship, and sit in an assembly "as his people, hear his word, and with their mouth" (*ore tenus*, or in outward appearance) "show much love," they therefore think all is well, though their heart run "after their covetousness."[1] But what can be said to that convictive query? "How canst thou say thou lovest me, when thy heart is not with me?" When in reference to creatures it is required that "love be without dissimulation," and that we "love not in word or tongue, but in deed and truth;" will an outward appearance and show of love be sufficient towards the most amiable and most excellent one, the ever-blessed, heart-searching God?

Let this be laid as a ground most firm and stable,—that if the subject, thy *soul*, be capable, and the object, the *ever-blessed God*, be made known and set in view to the eye of the mind; if then there is not *love* towards him, there is *hatred*. What! can a reasonable soul be indifferent towards God, the all-comprehending Being? and with whom all have to do? the first and the continual Author of our life and being, whose invisible and eternal power are manifest in the visible things which he hath made; so that heaven and earth are full of his glory? Towards some remote foreign prince multitudes may be void of love and hatred alike, of whom they have no notice, with whom they have no business. Can it be so with us towards God, who is God alone, besides whom there is no other; in whom all live, and move, and have their being; who is, therefore, not far from any one of us; and whom all are obliged to take for their God, and must, if they accept him not, be taken for refusers? A thing that carries *with* it most horrid guilt, and carries *in* it downright

[1] Ezek. xxxiii. 31.

enmity; and the more heinous, when, with any, it is covered with lying lips, with the cloak of a profession; namely, that they have taken him for their God, when such as say that "he is their God, yet have not known him."[1] For that ignorance must proceed from enmity, a "not liking to retain God in their knowledge."[2] Of which ignorance from disaffection, if heathens might be guilty, as *they* were the apostles there speaks of; much more deeply guilty are they, who being his professing people, yet know him not; as they were, whom our Lord so charges in the fore-cited *verses*.[3] For these "hide their hatred with lying lips," which is much more "an abomination to the Lord."[4] If you never so confidently pretend love to God, and he that knows all things, say, "I know you that you have not the love of God in you," as our Saviour tells the Jews,—who is more likely to be mistaken?[5] And can you be more confident, or more highly boast your relation to God or your love to him than they, who were so peculiarly his people, chosen out from all nations? If you say you are lovers of God, and the Son of God "whose eyes are as a flame of fire," and who "searches hearts and reins,"[6] say, "I know you that you have not the love of God in you;" how must it appal and dismay your hearts, to have his certain unerring judgment of you, thus to control your partial, self-flattering judgment!

And if this be indeed the state of the case with any of us, and he know it to be so, it is enough for our condemnation; but for our saving conviction it is necessary that we know it too: therefore let us search our own hearts and try them impartially, by all the several evidences and aggravations of enmity against God in the foregoing discourse.[7]

And to all these, I add here some enlargement upon what was more lightly touched, (as within the narrow limits of time wherein that discourse was delivered, it could not be otherwise),[8] namely, disobedience to that plain, express com-

[1] John viii. 54, 55. [2] Rom. i. 28. [3] John viii. 54, 55.
[4] Prov. x. 18. [5] John v. 42. [6] Rev. ii. 18, 23.
[7] From p. 364 to p. 380. [8] Pp. 371, 372.

mand of our Lord: "To lay up our treasure, not on earth, but in heaven," so as "to have our hearts also there."[1]

This I choose to insist upon in reference to our present purpose, that where there is a remaining and a reigning enmity against God, there may be a thorough conviction of it in order to reconciliation; both because as to this thing, the rule we are to judge by is so very plain in the word of God; and because the temper and bent of our own hearts in this respect, is so easily discernible to them that will diligently and faithfully observe themselves.

Scripture is most express herein, as in the place last mentioned,—that they whose hearts are on earth and not in heaven, "have no treasure in heaven." And what can be a greater evidence of enmity to God than to have the bent and tendency of your heart and spirit directly contrary to the mind of God concerning you, or to what he would have it be and it must necessarily be, that you may not be lost and miserable for ever?

The enmity to him, which he so much resents, is not your designing any hurt or prejudice to him; but the contrariety of your temper to his kind and merciful design towards you. Therefore they that "mind earthly things," that is, that savour them most,—as the word signifies, and it must be understood as excluding the savour of better things,—that is, who only savour them, and taste no pleasure or delight in spiritual or heavenly things; such are said to be "enemies to the cross of Christ:" that is, to the design of his dying upon the cross, which was to procure for his redeemed a blessed state in heaven and to bring them *thither*, not to plant and settle them here on earth. They are enemies therefore, because his design and theirs lie contrary, and oppose one another. He is all for having them to heaven, and was so intent upon that design as not to shun dying upon a cross to effect it; they are all for an earthly felicity, and for a continual abode upon earth, to enjoy it. This is an opposition full of spite and enmity,—to oppose him in a design of love,

[1] Matt. vi. 19, 21

and upon which his heart was set with so much earnestness! Therefore is the carnal mind said to be "enmity against God,"[1] even as it is *death;*[2] but to whom? not to the blessed God himself, which you know is impossible, but to us. It "is not subject to his law, nor indeed can be;" for that is "spiritual,"[3] and the best on earth find themselves, in too great degree, "carnal," and here lies the contrariety; much more when this carnality is total. And this law is the law of the "Spirit of life, in Christ Jesus," which directly tends to "make us free from the law of sin, and death;"[4] which it doth when the Spirit of God prevails, and gets the victory over this carnality of mind, so that we come to "walk, not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." In the meantime they that are "after the flesh, do only savour the things of the flesh; as they that are after the Spirit, do the things of the Spirit:"[5] and they that "are after the flesh shall die, but they that by the Spirit mortify the deeds of the flesh shall live."[6] Therefore we see the reason why it is above said, they that are "in the flesh," or under a prevailing carnality, "cannot please God;" for "he takes no pleasure in the death of a sinner, but that he should turn, and live."[7] You cannot please him, because the bent of your carnal mind lies cross to his saving design; you are "enemies in your mind" to him, for your mind is most opposite to his mind; he is for saving you, you are for self-destruction; you hate him, as you "love death."[8]

Therefore also they that "love this world, the love of the Father is not in them."[9] He would have them do his will, and abide in a blessed state for ever; but while they love this world, their hearts are set upon a vanishing thing; for the "world and the lust thereof" must pass away and be gone.[10] They cannot love him, while in mind, and will, and design, they so little agree with him. And hereupon is the "friendship of this world" said to be "enmity against God,"

[1] Rom. viii. 7. [2] Ver. 6. [3] Chap. vii. 14. [4] Chap. viii. 2.
[5] Ver. 5. [6] Ver. 13. [7] Ezek. xxxiii. 11. [8] Prov. viii. 36.
[9] 1 John ii. 15. [10] Ver. 17.

and he that will be a friend of this world, makes himself an enemy to God.[1] The design of his amity with you is disappointed and lost, therefore he can look upon you no otherwise than as enemies to him.

And now if this be the temper of your mind and spirit, how easily, by looking into your own hearts, might you discern it! "Know you not your own selves?"[2] As if it were said, 'it is a reproach to be ignorant, or without this knowledge; what is so near you as yourselves?' Do you not know your own minds? whether you had rather have your portion for ever on earth or in heaven? whether you more value a heavenly treasure or the treasures of this earth? If you chiefly mind earthly things, how can you but know it? Do but take an account of yourselves; where are your hearts all the day from morning to night? from day to day? from week to week? from year to year? what thoughts, designs, cares, delights are they that usually fill your souls? are they not worldly, carnal, earthly? Trace your own hearts. "How canst thou say, I am not polluted, see thy way—,"[3] mark thy own footsteps, see what course thou hast held, years together, even under the gospel; and when thou hast been so often warned, even by him who bought thee by his blood, to "seek first the kingdom of heaven"—"to strive to enter in at the strait gate"—and told how precious a thing thy soul is, even more worth than all the world; and how fearful a bargain thou wouldst have of it, if thou shouldst "gain the whole world, and lose thy soul!" And if all the neglects of his warnings and counsels have proceeded from the worldliness, earthliness, and carnality of thy heart and mind, and all this is declared to be enmity against God; then cast thyself down at his foot, and say to him, 'Now, Lord, I yield to conviction; I now perceive I have been "alienated, and an enemy in my mind by wicked works," though I never suspected any such thing by myself before.'

And know that till then the gospel of reconciliation will do thee no good; thou wilt never be the better for it, though

[1] James iv. 4 [2] 2 Cor. xiii. 5. [3] Jer. ii. 23.

thou livest under it all thy days: all exhortations to be reconciled to God and to get this dreadful disease of enmity against God cured, will avail no more than physic or a physician to one that counts he is well, and feels himself not at all sick. All thy Redeemer's calls will sound in thine ears, as if he "called the righteous, and not a sinner to repentance."

But that such calls might or may yet signify the more, know that reconciliation not only comprehends a conviction of the fact, that thou hast been an enemy; but will also contain, in thy case, if ever thou be reconciled,

2. A clear and lively apprehension, with dread and horror, of the monstrous iniquity and wickedness thereof. This hath been or must be wrought in thee. And when thou art convicted in thy conscience of thy being an enemy to the ever-blessed God, how canst thou but see thyself to be a vile and wicked creature upon this account? This is thy case, and thou must apprehend it accordingly, that thou art an "enemy in thy mind," and "by wicked works." For what can be wickeder than to hate the God of thy life? even him who is love and goodness itself in highest perfection? What! to hate the God of all grace, he that is the Lord, the Lord gracious and merciful, abounding in loving-kindness, goodness, and truth? Bethink thyself, make thy reflections, view the face of thy soul, in the mirror of that most righteous law: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and soul, and might, and mind." And doth it not astonish thee to behold enmity filling up in thy soul the room and place of love? that thou findest thou hast, in thy soul, a power of thinking thoughts, but canst take no pleasure to think of God? Thou hast in thy nature a principle of love, and thou canst love thy friend, thy child, yea, thy money, and (what is worse) thy lust; but canst not love thy God! How fearful a case, that when thou hast a mind and spirit in thee made up of reason and love, it should against all reason love things less lovely, as earth and vanity; yea, even most hateful, as sin and iniquity; but cannot love its own Father,

even him whose offspring it is, and to whom alone the title belongs of "Father of spirits!" [1]

How monstrous a deformity is this! How fearful a transformation of a reasonable, immortal mind and spirit! If thy body were wrested into never so horrid and hideous shapes, there were nothing, in point of horror, comparable to this deformedness of thy soul.

Nor canst thou ever be reconciled to God, till there be unreconcilableness to thyself as thou art in this state; and till thou be the most frightful, hateful spectacle to thyself on this account. Thou wilt never look upon thy own carnal mind or thy friendliness towards this world, which is declared to be enmity against God,[2] with a kind self-indulgent eye any more, but as having in them the most amazing wickedness; such whereby a reasonable soul, an understanding mind and spirit, is brought to love a clod of clay, a lump of earth, yea, even sin itself, rather than the ever-blessed and most holy God of heaven!

Let no man ever think himself in a way of reconciliation to God till he find in his soul a very deep sense of so hateful an evil as this; and have expressly charged himself with it before the throne of the Most High.

If you find there is a difficulty in it and that your hearts are hardly brought to it; that they fly back and recoil, and will not yield that anything so bad is to be charged upon them; take so much the more pains, labour and strive with them the more, to bring them to it; because the whole business of your peace and reconciliation with God depends upon it. You can never be reconciled, till you see your not being so, or your continuing enmity, is a thing not to be

[1] So some heathens have conceived of God, as the νοῦς πατρικός, the paternal mind. *Hierocl.* And so the apostle quotes a heathen poet, speaking of ourselves as God's offspring; and thereupon adds that the Godhead is not like silver, and gold, whereas he *is* like our minds or spirits; whence we might collect how unreasonable it is rather to love, not only silver, and gold, which is unlike him, but even sin, which is most contrary and hateful to him.

[2] Rom. viii. 7; James iv. 4.

endured; that if thou couldst be truly charged with hating thy own father, or mother, or wife, or child, or thy prince, or country; none of these, though monstrously bad, are by many degrees so ill things as the hating of thy God.

Therefore since this charge cannot be denied, it must be aggravated upon thy own soul till thou feel the weight and burden of it, and that now at length thou art brought to say, 'I cannot endure to dwell with myself, I cannot keep myself company, nor eat, or drink, or sleep, or converse with myself in peace, till my heart be changed and the case be altered with me in this respect.' If thou canst truly say, Christ hath reconciled thee, thus thou hast felt and found it; or thus thou wilt find it, if ever thy reconciliation be brought about.

3. You that are reconciled may reflect and take notice of this, as a further very remarkable thing in your own story, that you have been made deeply sensible of your great sinfulness in *other* respects; and for others, that are yet to be reconciled, know that this belongs to the reconciliation which you are to endeavour and seek after,—a deep sense of sin in the *full extent* of it.

As love is the fulfilling of the law, and is therefore to be considered, not in one single duty only, but as the spring and source of all other duty; so enmity is to be looked upon not as one single sin only, but as the spring and fountain of all other sin.

Therefore when you are convinced and made sensible of your enmity against God, you have been or must be led on from this fountain, to the several impure streams and rivulets issuing from it; and have a like conviction and sense of your sinfulness in the larger extent and compass of it, and *that* in such respects whereof slighter penitents take little notice. As for instance,

i. You have had or must have a sight and sense of sin as *sin*. Many apprehend little of it beside the sound of the word, and make a light matter of it. 'I am a sinner,' is soon said, when it is little understood what *sin is*, or what it is *to be a*

sinner. But you have *conceived*, or must conceive of sin as a violation of the holy law of God; an affront to the authority of your Maker and sovereign Lord, a setting of your own will above and against the supreme will of the Most High. Hereupon you must consider, if yet you have not, what a fearful thing it is to be a sinner, and say with yourself, 'O what a monstrous vile wretch am I! that was nothing but the other day, and now, being raised up into being a reasonable creature, capable of subjection to a law, to rise up in rebellion against him that gave me breath!' What! to contend against him who is thy life and the length of thy days? how horrid must this be in thy eyes!

ii. You must have a thorough conviction and sense of the sinfulness of your *nature*, as having been sinful from the womb, born in sin, conceived and brought forth in iniquity.[1] Hence you are to bethink yourself, 'What a loathsome creature have I been from my original! to have come into the world with a nature poisoned and envenomed with sin! What a wonder was it that the holy God would suffer me to breathe in the world so long, and feed and sustain me so many days!' Many may have some sense of wicked acts, that have no sense of the impurity of their natures. This should fill thee with confusion and self-abhorrence!

iii. Of such sinful inclinations and actions as were most directly against God. Many can be convinced of wrong done to a neighbour, that have no sense of their having wronged the God of their lives by continual neglects of him, casting him out of their thoughts and hearts, and living as "without God in the world;" and as if they had been made to please and serve themselves, and not him.

iv. But there must also be a deep sense too of sins against thy *neighbour*. For on the other hand, there are too many that are so taken up about the commands of the first table as to overlook those of the second; that if they cannot be accused of gross idolatry or of the neglect of God's external worship, think themselves very innocent, when in

[1] Ps. lviii. 3; Ps. li. 5.

the meantime they live, as to their neighbours, in envy, hatred, malice,—hateful, and hating one another; make no scruple of cozening or defrauding a neighbour for their own advantage, or of bearing him a grudge, of harbouring thoughts of revenge against him; whereas we are plainly told, that if we forgive not our offending brother, neither will God forgive us; and are taught to pray for forgiveness to ourselves, but as we forgive others; and that "he that hates his brother, abides in death;"[1] yea, and that when the law of God requires us to love our neighbour as ourselves, we are obliged not only not to harm him, but to do him all the good we can, as we have opportunity and as we are able; when we see him in distress, to relieve and help him; especially,—if we see him go on in a sinful course,—to admonish and reprove him with prudent friendliness, and "not suffer sin upon him;" otherwise thy righteous judge will reckon that thou "hatest him in thy heart."[2]

v. And thou oughtest to be sensible too of sins against thyself. For when God's law requires us to love our neighbour as ourselves, it implies there is a love which we owe to ourselves; not that inordinate self-love, which excludes both love to God and our neighbour; but such as is subordinate to the one and co-ordinate with the other. Consider therefore, whether thou hast not been guilty of sinning against thyself; against thy body in gluttony, drunkenness, fulfilling the lust of it; against thy soul, in neglecting it, in famishing it, letting it pine and waste away in thy iniquities; in ignorance, worldliness, carnality, estrangedness from God, never looking after a Saviour for it, not using the appointed means of thy salvation. What multitudes live all their days in sin of this kind, and never accuse or blame themselves for it!

vi. And you must labour to be sensible of all such sins against your neighbour and yourselves, as sins, though not immediately or directly, yet principally against God himself; because he is the supreme Lawgiver, and it is he who by his

[1] 1 John iii. 14. [2] Lev. 19, 17.

law hath settled that order in the world which by such sins you have violated and broken.

Therefore doth that great penitent thus accuse himself in his humble confession to the great God: "Against thee, thee only have I sinned,"[1]—reflecting upon the transgressions by which he had highly wronged Uriah, Bathsheba, and his own soul; because there is but one sovereign Lawgiver,[2] by whose authority only, either put forth immediately by himself or derived to his vicegerents, all just laws are made, by which there comes to be any such thing as sin or duty in the world. Therefore you must charge yourself as having offended *him*, by all the sins that ever you were guilty of; though man was the *object*, God's law was the *rule*, sinned against.

vii. You ought therefore to be sensible of secret sins, which he only knows; as well as open, and such as tend to bring reproach upon you amongst men.

viii. And, amongst them, of the sins of your heart and inward man; evil thoughts, designs, affections, inclinations, as well as of such as have broken forth into outward actions.

ix. Of sinful *omissions*, as well as *commissions*; you must be sensible, not only of the evil which you have done, but what good you might and ought to have done, which you have not done.

The judgment of the great day, as it is represented Matt. xxv. from verse 31 to the end of the chapter, runs, you see, chiefly upon the omissions of the condemned, in opposition to the performances of them that are absolved and adjudged to life everlasting. And before, in the same chapter, he that made no use of his *one* talent is doomed unto "outer darkness, where is weeping and gnashing of teeth," under the name of an "unprofitable servant;"[3] that is, a "wicked and slothful servant," as he is called.[4]

For though, when we have done all we can, we are to count ourselves "unprofitable servants," and to God we are so; yet we ought, and are capable, to be profitable to ourselves

[1] Ps. li. 4. [2] James iv. 12. [3] Ver. 30. [4] Ver. 26.

and to other men; and to God we ought to be faithful servants, though we cannot be profitable. But will you count him a faithful servant, who can only plead for himself to his master: 'I have not embezzled your goods, destroyed your cattle, or burnt your house;' when yet he never did him real service?

If ever therefore you be reconciled to God, you will be or have been in bitter agonies of spirit before him in the review of your former fruitless life, and that you have lived so long in the world to so little purpose!

x. You must have been or will yet be deeply affected with the sense of sins, not only against the holy righteous law of God, but against the gospel of his Son; not only that you have swerved from the rules which were given you and neglected the ends you were made for, as you are God's creatures and the work of his hands, thereby exposing yourselves to his wrath and justice; but that you have slighted the only remedy tendered you in the gospel, "neglected the great salvation" that was wrought out and "began to be spoken by the Lord himself."[1] Consider, were you never in dread? did you never cry out affrighted: 'How can I escape, who have neglected such a salvation? such a Saviour?' It must at one time or other cut and wound your souls to think, 'How many serious warnings, earnest invitations, affectionate entreaties, heart-melting allurements have I withstood! How often have I been besought, in the name of a crucified dying Redeemer, to resign and surrender myself to him, to submit to his authority, to accept his mercy, and have refused! The heavy yoke and burden of sin and guilt have been more tolerable to me than his "easy yoke and light burden." I have more busied myself to increase my interest and share in this present world, than to gain a part in that fulness of grace, righteousness, spirit, and life which is treasured up in him.' Your reconciliation can never be brought about but upon a heart-wounding sense of your being so long unrecon-

[1] Heb. ii. 3, 4.

ciled, and your having disregarded the great and merciful Reconciler.

4. If Christ hath brought about in you a thorough reconciliation to God, *this* further belongs to the story of his dealings with you, as that which he hath given you to experience; or if he have not yet reconciled you, it is that which, if ever you be reconciled, you are yet to expect; namely, a deep inward apprehension and sense both of the *dreadfulness* and *dueness* of Divine displeasure towards you for your former enmity against him, and for all the other wickedness that hath accompanied it.

i. Of the dreadfulness of his displeasure. You could no longer make light of it, or eat and drink and sleep in quiet, and give yourself the liberty of mirth and jollity, while you still lay under it. God is said to be "angry with the wicked every day,"[1] and to "hate all the workers of iniquity;"[2] you will count it a "fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God," when he saith, "vengeance belongs to him, and he will repay it,"[3] and when you have reason to apprehend him "as lifting up his hand to heaven," and saying, "I live for ever;" as "whetting the glittering sword, and his hand taking hold of vengeance."[4] You must have thoughts, or will yet think with yourself, "who knows the power of his anger?"[5] And by how much the less you can know it, so much the more you must have dreaded it. For all the while you have been abusing his patience, long-suffering, and forbearance, not considering that the "goodness of God did lead you to repentance." So long as you were "despising the riches of his goodness," you were "treasuring up to yourselves wrath against the day of wrath, and the revelation of his righteous judgment."[6] And to have treasures of unknown wrath, far beyond what you could conceive, laying up in store against you, how amazing must this be to you! "Destruction from the Almighty,"—what a "terror" must that be to you![7] To eat and drink under wrath! to buy and

[1] Ps. vii. 11. [2] Ps. v. 5. [3] Heb. x. 30, 31. [4] Deut. xxxii. 40, 41. [5] Ps. xc. 11. [6] Rom. ii. 4, 5. [7] Job xxxi. 23.

sell, to plough and sow, and all under wrath, and with a curse from God, covering you as a garment, cleaving to you as a girdle, flowing as oil into your bones, mingling with all your affairs and all your comforts, with whatsoever you do and whatsoever you enjoy; and to be, all the while, upon the brink of eternity, and not, for aught you know, to have a hand-breadth, not more than a breath, between you and eternal woes and flames, and none to deliver you from the wrath to come,—this cannot have been an easy condition! And the less when you considered,

ii. The dueness of God's wrath and displeasure unto you; that how terrible soever it is, it is all most justly deserved. You must have been made to see and say, 'Indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish did most righteously belong to me, as my most proper portion; to me, an enemy to the God of my life, who gave me breath and being; upon the treasures of whose bounty I have lived all my days; to whom, when he "filled my house with good things," yet I often in my heart said, "Depart from me; for I desire not the knowledge of thy ways."[1] And as the law of love to God, the great original law, had engaged me to keep all his other commandments, so my enmity against him hath made me break them all; so that I have lived a life of disobedience and rebellion, all my time thus far. And though he hath offered me terms of peace, and I have been often and earnestly besought by those that have spoken to me in Christ's stead, my bleeding, dying Redeemer and Lord, to be reconciled to God; yet I have hitherto borne toward him an impenitent, implacable heart. If there were ten thousand hells, they were all due to me; I have deserved them all.'

5. Such as have been reconciled have been brought, by believing, to apprehend God's reconcilableness to them in and by his own Son. This also belongs to the history of God's dispensation towards them, and may instruct others, by letting them know what must be wrought in them that they *may be* reconciled. It is their special advantage, that

[1] Job xxi. 14, 15.

live under the gospel, that therein they behold "God reconciling the world to himself, by Jesus Christ."[1]

This is the sum of the gospel, that "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."[2] Hereby they "may know and believe the love God hath to them,"[3] and that, though "they have been alienated and enemies in their minds by wicked works," yet he is not irreconcilable. This is the gospel of the grace of God, which he testifies and they are to believe, unless they will "make him a liar."[4] And therefore, notwithstanding the sense they ought to have of their having been enemies, and of the horrid wickedness hereof, and of their sinful temper and course in all other respects, together with the terrors of God's wrath and their desert of it to the uttermost; they are yet to conjoin therewith the belief of his willingness to be reconciled. And hereby he melts and breaks their hearts; namely, by this discovery of his good will, *believed;* for disbelieved, it can signify nothing, nor have any effect upon them; the gospel is his "power to salvation, to everyone that believeth,"[5] and "works effectually in them that believe."[6] So it is the immediate instrument of their regeneration: "after that the love and kindness of God to men appears," that is, so as that they believe it, "he saves them by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost."[7] And then he makes them know "it is not by works of righteousness, which they have done, but by his mercy," as it is there expressed. They are not, as was formerly said, the objects of his *delightful* love, before their regeneration; but they may be of his pity or mercy,—his *compassionate* love; and this they are to believe, as the general proposal of his gospel declares it: and by the belief hereof, he conquers their enmity, and subdues them into compliance with his good and acceptable will. These glad tidings, that he is truly willing to receive any returning soul,

[1] 2 Cor. v. 18, 19. [2] John iii. 16. [3] 1 John iv. 16. [4] 1 John v. 10.
[5] Rom. i. 16. [6] 1 Thess. ii. 13. [7] Titus iii. 4, 5.

vanquishes their disaffection and overcomes their hearts; makes them say with themselves, 'Why should I still continue alienated from the God who is so gracious and merciful, abundant in loving kindness, goodness, and truth,—as his name signifies,[1]—though he will by no means clear the guilty; that is, the obstinate, impenitent, and implacable.'

But if this discovery of the grace of God can find no entrance, sinner, into thy soul; if it remain shut up in unbelief; or if, when he tells thee over and over that "he takes no pleasure in the death of sinners, but that they turn and live," thou wilt not believe him, but still think him implacable, and, Cain-like, say thy sin is greater than can be forgiven: this hardens thy heart in enmity against him, and makes thee say, "There is no hope, I have loved strangers, and after them will I go."[2] Therefore if ever thou hast been or shalt be reconciled to God, as thou hast not been left in a stupid insensibleness of thy former wickedness, so thou hast been kept from sinking into an utter despair of God's mercy; thy reconciliation is brought about by thy believing his reconcilableness.

6. Hereupon thou wast brought to "entreat his favour with thy whole heart, and that he would be merciful to thee according to his word."[3] When thou sawest, though thy case was very horrid and dismal, yet it was not hopeless, and that there was a ground for prayer in the hope of mercy, then didst thou, or yet wilt, set thyself in good earnest to supplicate and cry mightily for pardoning and heart-renewing grace. Where is no hope, there can be no prayer; this posture of soul thou hast been wrought up to, or wilt be, if ever thou be reconciled. Hope gives life and breath to prayer, and prayer to peace and friendship with God. When God promises to "take away the stony heart," and give the new one, "the heart of flesh;" he declares that even "for this he will be inquired of," and sought unto.[4] Nor doth the soul, when hope of mercy according to God's word and

[1] Exod. xxxiv. 7, 8. [2] Jer. ii. 25. [3] Ps. cxix. 58.
[4] Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 37.

promise, gives it vent, breathe faint breath in prayer; but the whole heart is engaged, all the powers of the soul are put into a fervent motion. Despair stupifies, hope fills the soul with vigour; the favour of God is sought, not with cold indifferency, but as that wherein "stands thy life;"[1] and which is "better than life,"[2] without it, can be.

But then whereas the gospel, under which thou livest, informs thee that God cannot be approached by a sinful creature, (as men are and as thou must own thyself to be,) but through Christ, the only Mediator between God and men; and that thou canst not approach him in and by Christ, if thou be not in him,—

7. Thou art hereupon led to Christ, and brought to receive him with all thy heart and soul,[3] and to resign and give thyself up wholly to him.[4] Not knowing, in thy distress, what to do with thyself, and he compassionately inviting thee, "O thou weary, heavy laden soul, come unto me, and I will give thee rest,"[5] and assuring thee, that "whosoever comes to him, he will in nowise cast out,"[6]—thou thereupon with an humble, thankful, willing heart art brought to comply with his merciful offer, acceptest him and yieldest up thyself, no more to be thy own, but his; and thus believing in his name, thou ownest him in his office as the great Peacemaker between God and thee.

8. Whereupon thou hast been brought to apply thyself, through Christ, to the blessed God, and humbly to "take hold of his covenant."[7] Thou hast "come to God the Judge of all," having "come to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant;"[8] and been enabled to covenant with him, according to what he himself hath declared to be the purport and sum and substance of his covenant; that is, if thou art reconciled, thou hast taken him to be thy only God, thy supreme and sovereign good, thy chief and only satisfying portion,[9] whom thou art most pleasantly to enjoy and in whom thou art to

[1] Ps. xxx. 5. [2] Ps. lxiii. 3. [3] John i. 12; Rom. x. 10.
[4] 2 Cor. viii. 5. [5] Matt. xi. 28. [6] John vi. 37.
[7] Isa. lvi. 2. [8] Heb. xii. 23, 24. [9] Ps. xvi. 5, 6.

take highest delight, above all things in heaven or earth;[1] and whom thou art to believe willing, according to this covenant, to do for thee in outward and temporal respects, what he judges fittest and best; and for thy soul, in his own way and method, all that is requisite for thy present support and future blessedness: and to be thy supreme and sovereign Ruler and Lord, whom thou art to thy uttermost to please, serve, fear, obey, and glorify above all other; and to whom thou must reckon it belongs, according to this covenant, to forgive thy iniquities; and by it, as well as by natural right, to govern and dispose of thee in all thy thoughts, actions, inclinations, and affairs, according to his own holy will. And thou givest up thyself absolutely and entirely to him, to be of his people; to be taught and ruled by him.

This is the covenant which in thy baptism thy parents, who had nearest natural relation to thee, entered into for thee,—as children do, in their parents, stand obliged to the government under which they live; but which, when thou art come to use an understanding of thy own, thou art to enter into with the great God, for *thyself;* as persons, come to a certain age of maturity, are called to avow their allegiance to their secular rulers.

And because it is made with sinners, such as had been in rebellion against the Majesty of heaven, and therefore by a mediator and by sacrifice; it is therefore a covenant of reconciliation, and the sacrifice, by which it is made, is a propitiation or a reconciling sacrifice.

If therefore Christ hath reconciled thee to God, or if ever thou shalt be reconciled, this covenant must pass between him and thee; this is to come into the history of his dealings with thy soul. And it ought to be with thee a great solemnity, and to fill thy soul with a wondering joy, that the great God, whom thou hadst so highly offended, should ever vouchsafe to covenant with thee a sinful worm!

But because the manner of this covenanting is so fully set down by Mr. Joseph Allen; and in a little treatise called

[1] Ps. lxxiii. 25.

"Self-dedication," and in another of "Yielding ourselves to God," I shall not further enlarge upon it here.

9. If thou be reconciled, the frame and bent of thy soul is so far altered and changed, that thy carnal mind is become, in a prevailing degree, spiritual; and thy worldly heart is taken off, in a like measure, from this present world, and set upon God and heaven. For the "carnal mind is enmity against God," and they "that love this world, the love of the Father is not in them;" and he that will be a "friend of this world," is the "enemy of God."[1] But canst thou be reconciled, and still be an enemy? And how canst thou *not* be an enemy, when not in this or that single act only, but in the main bent and frame of thy soul, thou resistest his will, and in thy whole course "walkest contrary to him?"

10. If thy reconciliation to God have been brought about, there must be suitable walking afterwards; which includes two things. i. Amity must be continued, that is, there must be a very great care that there may be no new breach. ii. There must be much uneasiness of spirit, if there have been a new breach, till it be composed and made up again.

i. Where there is a thorough reconciliation, amity must be continued; care taken of giving any new offence or the making any new breach, by not doing what will displease and by a friendly intercourse continued and kept up. For there may be a new breach, or a new offence may be given again, either of these ways; either by breaking out into any fresh quarrel or contentions, or by breaking off friendly intercourse. As, if there have been a war between two nations, when a firm peace is made, there ensues both a ceasing from hostilities, and free commerce; so if thou hast made peace with God and hast entered into a league and covenant of reconciliation with him, thou must take great care, to thy uttermost, to sin no more; not deliberately to do anything, that thou knowest will displease him. Thou must say, as is said in Job xxxiv. 32, "If I have done iniquity, I will do no more."

[1] Rom. viii. 7; 1 John ii. 15; James iv. 4.

And again; thou must take great heed of growing strange to him, of giving over or of becoming slack or cold in thy converse with him; for when he inquires, "Can two walk together if they be not agreed?" he thereby intimates, that if they be agreed, it is that they may walk together. And it is to be considered that in the text the unreconciled state consists, not only "in the enmity of the mind by wicked works," but also in being "alienated" from him, or strange to him; by either whereof thou givest him also cause of just offence, even after reconciliation.

ii. But if thou findest thou hast made a new breach, either of these ways, by doing anything that thou didst apprehend to be displeasing to him or by estranging thyself from him, there must be an uneasiness in thy spirit, and thou must be restless till it be composed and made up again. This is walking suitably to a reconciled state, to resolve with thyself, upon any new offence, "not to give sleep to thy eyes nor slumber to thy eyelids," till thou have humbled thyself before thy God, and sought his pardon by faith in the blood of his Son; with a resolution, in dependence on his grace and Spirit, to walk more carefully and more closely with him in thy future course, accounting always that in his favour is life.

Such things as these, if thou be reconciled to God, will compose and make up thy story of it. Such a narrative thou couldst give of it thyself, upon recollection; or at least thou canst say, when thou readest it thus put down to thy hand, these things thou hast found God hath wrought and done in thee; though perhaps they may not have come into thy mind in the same order wherein they are here set down: which is less material, if thou canst truly say such workings as these thou hast really felt in thine own heart, while God was dealing with thee for the bringing about this reconciliation.

But if this work be not yet done, if it is yet to be done, then know such stages as these thou must pass through. And thou art to be restless in thy spirit, while thou canst yet

say, 'Such and such of these things are still wanting in me; I have not yet found them; my heart agrees not in such and such points, with this narrative; I can give no such account of myself.' But wait and strive in hope that thou shalt yet find them, if thou persist, and do not grow negligent and indifferent whether any such reconciliation to God be effected in thee or no. And when thou hast found it, then art thou led to consider, in the next place,

II. God's reconciliation to thee; and inquire what that includes and carries in it. But here now, because his part lies in *Himself*, and may for some time have no discernible effects upon thy soul; therefore the account hereof is not to be carried on in the way of the history, as the other might. It is doctrinally written in his own word, and so is the matter of thy faith; not of thy present sense, as the other is. But as it is indefinitely propounded in his word, so it ought to be firmly believed and without wavering, as a sure part of the "true and faithful sayings of God," who is truth itself, and cannot deceive nor be deceived. And it ought to be believed with particular application to thyself, that thus and thus he bears himself towards thee as thy reconciled God, according as thou findest thy own soul thus truly reconciled to him.

For though thy reconciliation to him be no *cause* of his reconciliation to thee, yet it is a most certain evidence of it. Otherwise, i. You would be beforehand with him in love, whenas his word expressly says, "he loves us first."[1] ii. It would be true that he made us love him, having himself no love to us; whenas the same word says, "we love him, *because* he first loved us;" namely, with that compassionate love, whereof you formerly heard. iii. You would hereupon outdo him in point of love, and be better affected towards him than he is towards you. iv. If any could be reconciled to God, and yet God not be reconciled to them, and they die in that state, it would be possible there might be lovers of God in hell. And what can be more absurd in itself? or more contrary to the plain word of

[1] 1 John iv. 19.

God, that hath said: "The things which eye hath not seen are prepared for them that love God,"[1] and that "he hath promised the crown of life to them that love him."[2]

All which you cannot but apprehend to be intolerable absurdities; and they would all follow, if upon such grounds as have been mentioned you should apprehend yourself to be reconciled to him, and yet disbelieve his being reconciled to you.

Therefore having so sure a ground upon which to apprehend he is reconciled to you, when you find you are reconciled to him; let it now be considered what *his reconciliation to you imports*. Wherein, as in all that follows, I shall be very brief; that this part be not too unproportionable in bulk to the former gone out before it. And here two things, in the general, must be understood to be included in God's being reconciled to us. 1. His forgiving to us all the sins of our former state of enmity against him. 2. His receiving us into a state of amity and friendship with him.

How great things are both these! And if you cannot as yet with certainty conclude that you are reconciled to God, as thereupon to have a present assurance of his having thus forgiven and accepted you; yet you are however to apprehend both these as most certainly belonging to *their* state, who are reconciled to him, so as to make you most earnestly to covet and endeavour to get into that state; as perceiving how desirable a thing it is to have the eternal God no longer an enemy to you, but your friend.

1. Therefore you must apprehend God's being reconciled to you includes his *forgiving you all the sins* of your former state, wherein you lived in enmity against him. And of how vast compass and extent is his mercy towards you herein, when you consider,—what you were doing and what manner of life you led all that time; always sinning from morning to night, either by acting against him, or by not living with him and to him; not minding him, not fearing him, standing in no awe of him, never aiming to please, or serve, or glorify

[1] 1 Cor. ii. 9. [2] James i. 12.

him in anything you did, as if you were made for yourself, and not for him; and that your disobedience to him, your neglects of him, were all summed up in enmity; and how monstrous a thing it was to be an enemy, a hater of the ever-blessed God! And to have all this forgiven! So his own word plainly speaks: "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."[1]

And here you must understand aright what sort of pardon and forgiveness that is, when God is said to forgive; which you must conceive of by considering what sort of enmity yours was against him. The case is not as between equals, falling out and forgiving one another; but your enmity was that of an offending inferior and subject, rebelling against your sovereign rightful Lord, who hath both right and power to punish you. And then think how terrible punishment you deserved and were liable to—even an "everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power;"[2] whereupon consider what it signifies for him to forgive you! And see now whether you do not savour those words: "Blessed is the man;" or whether the sense of your case do not make you cry out, as those words may be read, "Oh the blessedness of him whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered! Oh the blessedness of him to whom the Lord doth not impute iniquity!" Of how mighty a load must it ease and disburden thy soul, to have thy offended Lord say to thee, 'Thou hast been sinning against me hitherto all thy days, when I have been all thy days doing thee good. Thou hast done "evilly against me as thou couldst;" slighted my authority and despised my mercy; I could "plead my rebukes against thee, with flames of fire;" if I should "whet my glittering sword, and my hand take hold of vengeance, how soon could I ease myself of so" feeble "an adversary, and avenge myself of" so contemptible an "enemy?" But I forgive thee! Now upon thy repent-

[1] Isa. lv. 7. [2] 2 Thess. i. 9.

ing and turning to me, with thy whole soul, I forgive thy ungodly, prayerless life, thy having been alienated, and an enemy in thy mind by wicked works. I forgive it to thee all! "Thy iniquity is all pardoned, thy sin covered;" I no more impute anything of it to thee.' What rock would not this melt? what stony heart would it not dissolve and break in pieces? And what! canst thou now be any longer an unreconciled enemy to such a sin-pardoning God?

Consider here more particularly the properties and consequences of this forgiveness. First, the properties of it, as that,

i. It is most *compassionate*, an act of tender mercy and pity; so says his own word: "I will be merciful to their unrighteousness."[1] "In his love and pity he redeemed, and he bare them;"[2] and "being full of compassion, he forgave their iniquity."[3] "For he remembered they were but flesh."[4]

ii. It is perfectly *free*, and of mere grace. "We are justified freely by his grace."[5] He invites sinners to come to him, even "without money and without price."[6] A great price indeed hath been paid, but by another hand; as we shall show when we come to the second head,—the way wherein our Lord effects this reconciliation, "in the body of his flesh through death." But no price is expected from us; he doth it "for his own sake."[7]

iii. It is *full and entire;* and that both in respect of the *object*, the sin forgiven,—"All manner of sin," that can be repented of, "shall be forgiven unto men;"[8] "I will pardon all their iniquities, whereby they have sinned against me,"[9]—and in respect of the *act* of forgiving: it shall be so full as to leave no displeasure behind: for, as he speaks, "I, even I am he that blotteth out thy iniquities," and there is not so much as a remembrance left; "I will not remember thy sins."[10] "Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more."[11]

[1] Heb. viii. 12. [2] Isa. lxiii. 9. [3] Ps. lxxviii. 38. [4] Ver. 39.
[5] Rom. iii. 24. [6] Isa. lv. 1. [7] Isa. xliii. 25. [8] Matt. xii. 31.
[9] Jer. xxxiii. 8. [10] Isa. xliii. 25. [11] Heb. viii. 12.

iv. It is *often repeated.* "He being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity . . . yea, many a time turned he his anger away."[1] Secondly, the *consequences* of this forgiveness.

i. Cessation of all acts that have either destruction for their end or enmity for their principle. In the very covenant of reconciliation, God reserves to himself a liberty of chastening his reconciled ones; yea, the case requiring it, he not only reserves the liberty, but takes upon him an obligation hereunto. For he expressly declares that "if his children forsake his law and walk not in his judgments, then he will visit their transgression with a rod and their iniquities with stripes;" but that, "nevertheless, he will not utterly take away his loving-kindness, nor suffer his faithfulness to fail, nor break his covenant . . . "[2] implying that otherwise his faithfulness would fail, and his covenant were broken on his part. And therefore when he deals not with a people upon covenant terms, but as castaways, and as people given up, he declares: "I will not punish your daughters,"[3] and "why should they be smitten any more?"[4] And they themselves own: "It was good for them to have been afflicted,"[5] and that he had done it "in very faithfulness."[6] And his correcting them is signified not only to consist with love, but to proceed from it; for it is said: "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth."[7] And those afflictions are properly *punitive* as they import warning to others, but not *vindictive* as tending to the destruction of themselves; but *corrective,* as intending their own amendment, besides warning to others, which also those that are destructive might do. But these afflictive strokes upon his own, as they intend warning to others, have the general nature of punishment in them. But they differ in their special kind, as being to themselves corrective only, not destructive or vindictive.

But upon the whole, when once he is reconciled to you, he no longer treats you as enemies; if sometimes he see cause to afflict his own, "he smites them not as he smites those that

[1] Ps. lxxviii. 38. [2] Ps. lxxxix. 31—34. [3] Hos. iv. 14.
[4] Isa. i. 5. [5] Ps. cxix. 71. [6] Ver. 75. [7] Heb. xii. 6.

smote them."[1] Your carriage doth not always please him, therefore it is not strange if his dealings do not always please you; but after forgiveness he intends your real and final hurt no more.

ii. A second consequent of God's forgiving you all your sins, is his seasonable manifestation hereof to you.

He may have forgiven you, and not judge it seasonable suddenly to make it known to you; he may judge it fit to hold you some time in suspense. And when by his grace he hath enabled you to exercise "repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ," whereupon you are in a pardoned state; you may yet some time remain in doubt, whether you were sincere herein or no. And He may not on a sudden put you out of doubt, but keep you a while in a waiting posture; as that which is more suitable to his own majesty and greatness, and to your own infirm and less established condition. "He waits to be gracious, and is exalted" even "in showing mercy, for he is a God of judgment," and doth show mercy judiciously,—when he judges it the fittest season; therefore are "they blessed that wait for him."[2] Assurance is the privilege, not of all his children, but of them that are come to a more grown stature; but in the meantime he sustains you by hope in his mercy, and lets not your heart sink within you; and when he sees it fit, lets you know he hath accepted the atonement for you which he hath enabled you to receive; and speaks that peace to you which is "the fruit of his lips," and which he only, by speaking it inwardly to your heart, can create; that "peace which passes all understanding"[3] and which belongs to his kingdom in you; "with joy in the Holy Ghost," when once the foundation is laid in "righteousness."[4]

2. This reconciliation on God's part, not only includes the forgiveness of your former enmity, with all the sins of that fearful state wherein you then were; but also his receiving you into a state of amity and friendship with himself. And

[1] Isa. xxvii. 7. [2] Isa. xxx. 18. [3] Isa. lvii. 18; Phil. iv. 7.
[4] Rom. xiv. 17.

this you are to take for a great addition to the former. A prince may pardon to a malefactor a capital crime, spare his forfeited life and estate, and yet not take him for a favourite and a friend. But when the blessed God forgives his enemies, he also takes them for his friends. Though those are distinct things, yet they are most closely conjunct; he always adds this latter to the former.

Abraham was called the friend of God,[1] that is, not only in the active sense, as now bearing a friendly mind towards God; but in the passive sense also, as now God hath a friendly mind towards him. And upon what account? Some may think, Abraham being a person of eminent sanctity, this may be said of him only upon that peculiar account. But see how the matter must be understood from what we find.[2] Abraham "believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness," and "he was called the friend of God;" this is spoken of him, not as an eminent saint only, but under the common notion of a believer; so that the same thing is truly to be said of every one that believes, with a justifying faith. So saith our Saviour to his disciples in common: "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you;"[3] and, "I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you,"[4]—which signifies his own friendly mind to them.

And now consider what this friendliness towards them includes. It must include,

i. Love, which is the very soul of friendship. So our Saviour expresses his own friendliness towards them that are his: "As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you; continue ye in my love,"[5] and the height of that love: "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man should lay down his life for his *friends*,"[6] though it is elsewhere further heightened from our having been sinners and *enemies*;[7] though it was then in view to him what he designed to make of them; namely, friends to him too. And so his friendship must

[1] Isa. xli. 8. [2] James ii. 23. [3] John xv. 14. [4] Ver. 15.
[5] Ver. 9. [6] Ver. 13. [7] Rom. v. 8, 10.

signify further, not love merely, but also,—after reconciliation there mentioned,[1]—

ii. A delightful complacential love. For such is the love of friends,—a love of delight,—which they take in one another; as if he had said, 'Now I have overcome you and won your hearts, I love you with that pleasantness, that delightful love which is proper to the state of friendship.' So such friends are spoken to: "O my dove . . . let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice, for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance comely;"[2] and that book abounds with expressions of that import: "Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse. How fair is my love!"[3] But besides what this friendship as such, or as it hath in it the general notion of friendship, includes; consider further some particularities belonging to this friendship, as,—

iii. How infinitely condescending it is on God's part. That the "high and lofty One, who inhabits eternity," who hath infinite fulness in himself, and could with delight live alone to all eternity,—as he did from all eternity,—that he should vouchsafe to take from among his own creatures such as he would make friends of; how admirable! much more, of *such* creatures; apostate revolted creatures, impure and vile creatures; such as he hath so much to do upon, to make them kind and holy, that they might be capable of his friendship!

According to the usual measures of friendship, it is with those that are like, yea, with equals. How transporting should it be to thy soul, that the great God should entertain and strike such a friendship with thee, so vile, so rebellious, and abject as thou wast! Solomon speaks of it as a wonderful thing, and even exceeding all belief, that God should "dwell *with men*;" which dwelling signifies friendly society. Saith he: "In very deed will God dwell with men,"—such creatures as men are now become? and with men, on earth? in this their low and mean state, and on this narrow, little, base spot, when even the bright and spacious heavens, yea, the

[1] Rom. v. 10. [2] Cant. ii. 14. [3] Chap. iv. 7, 9, 10, etc.

"heaven of heavens cannot contain him?"[1] How wonderful a thing is this, and even surpassing all wonders! Is it after the manner of men? How far, herein, are "his ways above our ways, and his thoughts above our thoughts! even as the heavens are above the earth."[2] Consider,

iv. How beneficial this his friendship to us is! Many friends can only wish well to one another; have neither wisdom or power really to befriend them: his friendship is most beneficial to them on whom it is placed, having all-sufficient fulness in himself to counsel, to support, to relieve, to supply them as the matter shall require.

v. How conversable he is with these his friends; being 1. Always present. One may have a wise and potent friend, but perhaps he is far off when there is greatest need of him. 2. Being intimately present with our minds and spirits. "The Lord Jesus Christ be with thy *spirit*:"[3] he can be always so. The most inward friends among men can have no immediate access to one another's spirits; but this is the peculiar advantage of this friend, that he can enter into our very souls; nothing is shut up from him. 3. How constant is God's friendship! He loves with an everlasting love, and to the end,[4] when other friendships are upon slight grounds, easily and often broken off.

Thus far we have seen what this mutual reconciliation imports, on our part towards God; and on God's part towards us. We now come to consider,

Secondly, the way wherein our Lord Jesus Christ, the Mediator between God and us, brings about this reconciliation; namely, "In the body of his flesh, through death."

The same thing is expressed in the 20th verse, by "his making peace by the blood of his cross," or his shedding his blood on the cross. The meaning of both expressions is, that he brought about this reconciliation by suffering death for us upon the cross.

Now because this reconciliation, as you have heard, includes

[1] 2 Chron. vi. 18. [2] Isa. lv. 8, 9. [3] 2 Tim. iv. 22.
[4] Jer. xxxi. 3; Isa. liv. 8; John xiii. 1.

both God's reconciliation to us and our reconciliation to God; and that both are effected by his dying upon the cross for us: we are to show how each of these is brought about this way.

I. How God's reconciliation to us is wrought, by Christ dying for us. You may say, why was this the means of reconciling God to us? For you may think with yourselves, if God had a mind to be reconciled to sinners, could he not have been so without letting his Son die for it? There are indeed difficulties in this matter, which are not fit to be brought into such a discourse as this; but I shall here say nothing about it but what is plain and easy to be understood.

1. You can easily apprehend that God saw it was necessary his Son should die in order to the saving of sinners, for who can think he would ever have consented to the death of his most beloved Son, if he had not seen it necessary? Therefore you must conclude it was necessary, whether you discern the reasons upon which it was so or no.

2. You can easily apprehend that the sins of men deserved eternal death, and that God threatened them with eternal death accordingly; for what death but eternal death, can that be which is opposed to eternal or everlasting life?[1] and which is executed upon all that are not reconciled, according to the sentence of the last judgment?[2]

3. You cannot but know that there were sacrifices under the law of Moses appointed to make atonement for sin, and that "without shedding of blood there could be no remission."[3]

4. It is easy to be understood that the blood of those sacrifices could not "take away sin," as is expressly said;[4] and therefore that they could not otherwise signify anything to the taking it away, than as they were types and shadows of that great sacrifice that once for all was to be offered up for that purpose. "Once in, or towards, the end of the

[1] Rom. v. 21; vi. 23. [2] Matt. xxv. 46. [3] Heb. ix. 22.
[4] Heb. x. 4.

world hath he appeared, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself."[1]

5. You can understand that as this could never have been without the consent of the Father and the Son; so by their consent it might be, that the innocent might suffer for the guilty: as one may be bound, body for body, for another.

6. And it is plain they did consent; "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life;"[2] and our Lord Jesus Christ himself says: "No man" could "take his life from him,"—that is, against his will, for he could have had twelve legions of angels to defend it,—but "he did lay it down,"[3] and "gave his life a ransom for many."[4]

7. So it came to pass that our Lord Jesus "suffered once, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God."[5] And "he was made sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be the righteousness of God in him."

8. And hereupon when God is reconciled to sinners, he doth not only forgive them, but he justifies them,—there being an equal recompense made to him; but of his own providing: and therefore to *us* it is most free, though it was very costly to Christ. So both these expressions, of the same thing, are put together: "We are justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins—that God might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."[6]

9. Thus God becomes reconciled to sinful men,—not to every one, but to them that sincerely *repent* and *believe*,—in a just, regular, and orderly way, most becoming his excellent Majesty. For though he forgive sinners, that had affronted him and rebelled against him; yet it is not without a sacrifice, and *that*, of his own Son; a sacrifice of infinite value: most becoming his grace and mercy, for that sacrifice was of

[1] Heb. ix. 26. [2] John iii. 16. [3] John x. 18. [4] Matt. xx. 28.
[5] 1 Pet. iii. 18. [6] Rom. iii. 24, 25.

his own providing: most becoming his justice, for though sin be forgiven, it is punished too; forgiven to us, but punished on his own Son, who consented to "bear our sins, in his own body on the tree:"[1] most becoming the truth of his word, for as that said, "without shedding of blood there could be no remission," the most precious blood was shed, that ever was, in order to our remission: most becoming his infinite wisdom, that found out this way of answering all purposes; that both he might be glorified in the highest degree, and yet sinners be saved. Grace hath herein abounded in all wisdom and prudence.[2]

II. We come now—having thus far seen how Christ's dying on the cross works God's reconciliation to us—to show also how it brings about our reconciliation to God.

And here you may observe we changed the method of speaking to this twofold reconciliation,—considered in *itself*, and as the *effect* of Christ's death. For though God is not actually reconciled to *us*, before he have disposed our hearts to a reconciliation unto him; yet the foundation of his being reconciled to us, is first laid in the death of his Son, or in the prospect and foresight of it, before there can be any disposition, on our parts, to such a reconciliation. And that being done, and it being thereby seen what this great sacrifice signifies to his being reconciled, whensoever that shall be; it comes, in the proper order, next to be considered which way it works, to bring about *our* reconciliation also. And it works, in order hereto, these two ways.

1. By preparing the ground of preaching the gospel of reconciliation, or of Christ crucified; which must first be, or have been resolved on, before there could be any gospel to reveal it. In this gospel "Christ is set forth as a propitiation, through faith in his blood."[3] And this is the proper and most apt means to work upon thy heart, sinner, to persuade thee to be reconciled to God. "Looking upon him whom thou hast pierced," is "that thou mayest mourn over him."[4] What should so melt and overcome thy heart, and make thee

[1] 1 Pet. ii. 24. [2] Eph. i. 6, 7. [3] Rom. iii. 25. [4] Zech. xii. 10.

yield to the terms of reconciliation? But he must be *represented*, that he may be "looked upon;" and therefore is the "preaching of Christ crucified, unto them that are called, the power of God, and the wisdom of God;"[1] the most powerful and the wisest method, and which God hath thought fittest, to win souls and reconcile them to himself. Therefore it is reckoned no less than a witchery, if they obey not the gospel, who have Christ "set forth before their eyes, as crucified among them;"[2] which *setting forth* could not be otherwise than in the gospel representation. For you know Christ was not actually crucified in Galatia, but at Jerusalem; therefore, saith our Lord himself: "But I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me."[3] "This was said," as it follows, "signifying what death he should die," that is, by being crucified. And this, supposing a due representation of him in the gospel was, in point of means, to draw all men. But it could only be sufficient, as a *means;* when yet it could not be a means sufficient, if there were not an *agent*, able to use it to that purpose. Therefore,

2. Our Redeemer's dying upon the cross did work towards our reconciliation, by procuring the Spirit to be given, in order to the making this most apt means effectual to this end.

And if this sacrifice of Christ on the cross was necessary to the obtaining forgiveness of sins; it was, at least, equally necessary to obtain the giving of the Spirit, without which all the rest were in vain. When Christ had died to reconcile both, (that is, Jew and Gentile), "in one body, by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby;" and thereupon "preached peace to them that were afar off, and to them that were nigh;" yet it was still necessary that "by one Spirit, both should have access to the Father;" otherwise they would never come at him; they would still, with implacable hearts, have kept at a distance.

Therefore "looking upon" a crucified Christ would never have had this effect, to make them "mourn over him whom they had pierced," if "the Spirit of grace and supplication"

[1] 1 Cor. i. 23, 24. [2] Gal. iii. 1. [3] John xii. 32.

were not poured forth.[1] They would with hard hearts have gazed long enough on this doleful spectacle, far enough from mourning, if the Spirit of Christ were not poured forth, as well as his blood.

And do we think that holy and pure Spirit would ever have been poured forth on so impure and unholy souls, if the precious blood of that invaluable sacrifice had not been poured forth to procure it? Those words of the apostle make this plain: "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us (for cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree) that the blessing of Abraham might" reach further—"come upon the Gentiles; that they might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith;"[2] or in their being made to believe the ever-blessed One was so far made a *curse*, that you might be capable of this *blessing*, and by it have your own enmity overcome and your reconciliation brought about.

Therefore doth our Lord direct us to pray for the Spirit, assuring us our "heavenly Father will give that Holy Spirit to them that ask him;"[3] as well knowing, his pouring forth his blood had deserved it should not any longer be an enclosed blessing; but which might be communicated to Jew and Gentile, and in his way and season "be poured out on all flesh."

Thus doth our Lord, "in the body of his flesh, through death," work out this twofold reconciliation both of God to you and of you to God. And now the USE follows, which must have reference both, 1. To this mutual reconciliation itself: "You hath he now reconciled;" and, 2. To the way wherein our Lord Jesus brings it about: "in the body of his flesh, through death."

The use we shall make of the former will be twofold,—according as this reconciliation itself is twofold, namely, God's reconciliation to us and our reconciliation to God;—namely, to persuade us, from sundry considerations, first, to believe God's reconcilableness to us. Secondly, to be willing,

[1] Zech. xii. 10. [2] Gal. iii. 13, 14. [3] Luke xi. 13.

hereupon, to be actually, and speedily reconciled to him. And the use which is only now intended to be made of the latter is to draw from it divers additional considerations, by which to enforce and give further strength to both those mentioned exhortations.

First. For the use of the former,—the doctrine of this reconciliation itself,—inasmuch as we have shown that it contains reconciliation on God's part, towards us, and on our part towards God, we must understand;

I. That God's reconciliation is asserted here to the persons whom the apostle now mentions, and whom he had before described as converts, saints, faithful in Christ;[1] that Christ had reconciled them; that is, restored them into a state of grace, favour, and acceptance, though they had been "alienated and enemies in their minds." Therefore, if when they become saints, faithful, etc., God was reconciled to them; while they were yet in their state of enmity, he was *reconcilable*. The plain use to be made of this is, that we be persuaded to believe God's reconcilableness to sinners, offending creatures, such as had been strangers to him, and enemies: whatsoever bar was in the way is so far removed,—as we shall show from the second head,—that he can be reconciled to such enemies and will actually be so, whensoever they turn to him.

This, sinner, is the sum of the gospel, which thou art to believe upon sundry considerations, which have their ground here; as

1. This gospel could never be intended for these only, to whom the apostle now writes. Can we think there was one gospel meant for Colossians, and another or none at all for Englishmen? Yea, when the apostle himself was converted and obtained mercy, it was for a "pattern to them that should hereafter believe."[2] You have the same warrant to believe, that, turning to God and believing on his Son, God will be reconciled to you, as he was to them.

2. This is the gospel which God hath ever declared to the world, without excepting any person, wheresoever his written

[1] Col. i. 1, 2. [2] 1 Tim. i. 16.

word hath come.[1] "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come to the waters," even he that hath no money, "come without money, and without price."[2] "Incline your ear, and come to me, hear, and your souls shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you."[3] "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not as your thoughts."[4]

So the tenour of his word hath always run: "Turn to me, and I will turn to you."[5] And is it not to be believed?

3. It is the gospel which he hath confirmed by his own solemn oath—"As I live, saith the Lord;"[6] having plainly propounded it, he swears to it,[7] and wilt thou not yet believe him?

4. When, after the fulness of time, it was more expressly revealed that there could be no turning to God but through Christ, this was the gospel which he himself preached,[8] and which, when he was leaving the world, he required should be preached to all the world.[9]

5. It is given as the sum of all the counsel of God.[10]

6. It is "the everlasting gospel," which is to continue through all ages, as the stated means of regenerating and renewing souls.[11]

7. It is this gospel which God blesses and makes effectual to this purpose. When herein "the love and kindness of God to men appears," then—"not by works of righteousness which they have done—but of his mercy he saves them, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost."[12] His mercy revealed softens and changes their hearts; so that by the "exceeding great and precious promises," contained in this gospel, they are "made partakers of a Divine nature."[13]

[1] Isa. lv. [2] Ver. 1. [3] Ver. 3. [4] Ver. 7, 8.
[5] 2 Chron. xxx. 6; Jer. iii. 12; Zech. i. 3; Mal. iii. 7.
[6] Ezek. xviii. 21—23, 31, 32. [7] Chap. xxxiii. 11. [8] Mark i. 14, 15.
[9] Mark xvi. 15, 16. [10] Acts xx. 21. [11] 1 Pet. i. 23—25.
[12] Titus iii. 4, 5. [13] 2 Pet. i. 4.

8. But it is by *believing* it becomes effectual to any blessed purpose. It "is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth;"[1] but to them that believe it not, it is without power and effects nothing. It "works effectually," on every one that "believes,"[2] but hath no efficacy, when it is not believed. "Much people," believing, "was added unto the Lord;"[3] but where there is no believing, there is no turning.

9. Where it is not believed, it hardens. We are therefore warned to "take heed of the evil heart of unbelief, lest we be hardened,"[4] and are told those hardened ones "that fell in the wilderness," were such as believed not, and that could not enter into Canaan, the type of heaven, "because of unbelief;"[5] and that the gospel could "not profit them, because it was not mixed with faith."[6]

10. It is in the same context mentioned, as a most provoking wickedness, to disbelieve this gospel of his. That sin was therefore said to be the "provocation;"[7] and, referring to the same time, the great God says: 'How long will this people provoke me? How long will it be ere they believe me?'[8] when their not believing his willingness to do better for them than only to bestow upon them an earthly Canaan, was their most provoking wickedness.

11. The not believing of this gospel of his is understood to be giving God the lie,[9] as believing it, "is setting to our seal that he is true."[10] But what inducement is it possible he can have to lie to his own creatures, who is himself all-sufficient, and who hath them absolutely in his power?

Or what man would lie for lying sake, having no inducement? It is therefore impossible for God to lie, as being inconsistent with the universal perfections of his nature; and therefore to impute falsehood to him, is highest blasphemy. And after all this, sinner, darest thou disbelieve God's reconcilableness to thee, upon his own declared terms; when here the whole business sticks, of reconciliation between him and thee?

[1] Rom. i. 16. [2] 1 Thess. ii. 13. [3] Acts xi. 24. [4] Heb. iii. 12, 13.
[5] Ver. 18, 19. [6] Chap. iv. 2. [7] Heb. iii. 15. [8] Num. xiv. 11.
[9] 1 John v. 10. [10] John iii. 33.

II. But there are yet other considerations to this purpose, to persuade thy belief of God's reconcilableness to thee, from the second head of discourse,—the way of our Lord's bringing about this reconciliation; namely, "in the body of his flesh, through death." And here his reconcilableness must be understood to signify two things: The *possibility* of God's being reconciled to sinners: his *willingness* to be reconciled. And the death of his Son upon the cross, in order hereto, affords considerations to evince both.

1. The *possibility* of the thing; which this sacrifice proves to be possible, because it makes it so. When the apostle asserts, that "without shedding of blood there is no remission" of sin,[1] and that it was "impossible the blood of bulls and goats should take it away;"[2] and that therefore our Lord came to take it away "in that body prepared for him,"[3] he therein implies it to be impossible to be otherwise taken away than by this blood shed upon the cross; nothing indeed being possible to God, which *becomes* him not: and it became him not otherwise to effect this design, and bring many sons to glory, but by the sufferings of this his Son. It was therefore not possible upon other terms;[4] but in this way it was possible, upon the account of these several things concurring:

i. The rich and infinite value and fulness of this sacrifice. The blood that was herein shed and the life that was laid down, though of a man, yet were the blood and life of *such* a man as was also God,[5] a man that was "God's own fellow."[6] As it was God that was offended, so it was God that did satisfy for the offence. ii. He was nearly allied to us, as a Redeemer ought to be. Because "we were partakers of flesh and blood, he took part with us of the same,"[7] therefore as man did offend, man suffered for it. iii. He freely consented hereto, both to become man and to suffer for man.[8] iv. He had no sin of his own to suffer for;[9] and as many other Scriptures

[1] Heb. ix. 22. [2] Chap. x. 4. [3] Ver. 5, 6. [4] Heb. ii. 10.
[5] Acts xx. 28; 1 John iii. 16. [6] Zech. xiii. 7. [7] Heb. ii. 14, 15.
[8] Phil. ii. 6—8; John x. 18. [9] 2 Cor. v. 21.

speak. v. He was, by a special Divine law, commissioned hereunto. Therefore his laying down his life was in itself no illegal act. "He had power to lay down his life," having received a commandment for it from the Father.[1] He came, having God's law, to this purpose, "in his heart."[2] vi. He was fully accepted herein above; his sacrifice having "a sweet-smelling odour" with it, unto God; because satisfying his justice, it made way for the free exercise of his grace and love.[3]

Therefore, sinner, canst thou disbelieve or doubt the very possibility of God's being reconciled to thee upon his own declared terms; when so extraordinary a course was taken that he might be reconciled?

2. And thou hast as great reason to believe his *willingness* to be reconciled, considering that this was consented to on purpose. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish."[4] Now consider; was his own Son given for what he was not willing of? His only-begotten Son? His very image?[5] The Son of his delights, always dear to him,[6] and who was specially dear to him for this very reason?[7] yea, and that it was the very cry of his blood from the cross: 'O forgive, forgive this repenting, believing sinner, be reconciled to him, O Father, for the sake of thy dying Son!' and yet was he unwilling?

What could induce him who is Love itself, to give up such a Son to so bitter, bloody, and ignominious sufferings, but his willingness to be reconciled to sinners? It were a blasphemy against the ever-blessed nature and being of God, to imagine he would have his most beloved Son suffer for suffering's sake! And for what other end could it be?

And there is as little reason to doubt the issue, but that, being an *enemy* thou wast reconciled "by the death of his Son," being *reconciled*, thou shalt be "saved by his life."[8] It therefore remains to press the

[1] John x. 18. [2] Ps. xl. 6—8. [3] Eph. v. 2. [4] John iii. 16.
[5] Heb. i. 2. [6] Prov. viii. 30. [7] John x. 17. [8] Rom. v. 10.

Second exhortation, which you may take in the apostle's words: We, the "ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us," do "pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."[1] Now *that* is put out of doubt, that God justly and honourably can be reconciled to you—without which it had been impossible—and that he is most unquestionably willing, are you yet unwilling to be reconciled to him? Consider both this reconciliation itself, brought about with some: "You hath he reconciled;" and the way of it: "In the body of his flesh, through death."

I. Some have been reconciled, that have been "alienated and enemies in their minds, by wicked works." Whereupon bethink yourselves—

1. Have you any greater reason to be implacable towards the blessed God, than those Colossians? Why should you be more wicked enemies? 2. Can you better maintain your cause against God? Are you more able to stand against all the power of his wrath, which you so little know?[2] 3. Can you better bear the loss and want of the comforts of his love, while you live? to have the great God for your friend, to whom you have free recourse, and may pour out your souls daily? upon whom you may cast all your cares? with whom you may walk in friendly love, and may converse with him every day? 4. Can you less need his supports in a dying hour? Will it be easy to you to die unreconciled? and afterwards to appear convicted, unreconcilable enemies before the tribunal of your Judge? and then to have no advocate, no intercessor to plead for you, when he himself must be your condemning Judge? and shall only say, "O that thou hadst known, in the day of thy visitation, the things that did belong to thy peace! But now they are hid from thine eyes."[3]

II. But we are further to persuade this reconciliation to God from the way wherein our Lord effects it; "in the body of his flesh, through death," or by dying a sacrifice upon the cross. And now you know this, will you not yet be reconciled to him? Consider,—

[1] 2 Cor. v. 20. [2] Ps. xc. 11. [3] Luke xix. 42.

1. You will herein frustrate and make insignificant to yourself, the highest demonstration that could be given of God's good-will towards you. "God so loved the world,"[1] etc., and what could our Lord himself have done more to testify his own love? For "greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends;"[2] yea, for those that were not so before, but wicked enemies; only that thereby they might be made friends.[3] And what could it signify to you, to represent the Divine love to you by so costly a demonstration, if it do not gain your love?

2. And what could be so apt a means, sinner, to break thy heart and conquer all thy former enmity, as to behold thy Redeemer dying upon the cross for thee? "They shall look upon me, whom they have pierced, and mourn:"[4] "And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me;" which our Lord said, "signifying what death he should die," by being lifted up on the cross.[5] Now what dost thou think of thyself, if such a sight will not move thee? An earthly, carnal, worldly mind, is declared over and over to be "enmity against God."[6] But how remarkable is it, that such a temper of mind should be so peculiarly signified to import "enmity to the cross of Christ?"[7] "I tell you of such, weeping," saith the apostle, that do continue their enmity even in the face of the cross, and who even by that itself are not overcome!

3. If thou wilt not be reconciled, Christ did, as to *thee*, die in vain; thou canst be nothing the better. Think what it must come to, that so precious blood, infinitely exceeding the value of all corruptible things, silver, and gold,[8] etc., should be shed to redeem and save such as thou, and yet do thee no good?

4. If thou continue to the last unreconciled, it not only doth thee no good, but it must cry and plead most terribly against thee. Bloodguiltiness is a fearful thing; what must

[1] John iii. 16. [2] John xv. 13. [3] Rom. v. 8. [4] Zech. xii. 10.
[5] John xii. 32, 33. [6] Rom. viii. 7; James iv. 4. [7] Phil. iii. 18, 19.
[8] 1 Pet. i. 18, 19.

it be, to be guilty of *such* blood! If thou wert guilty of the blood of thy father, thy child, or of the wife of thy bosom, how would it astonish thee! But to be guilty of the blood of the Son of God,—how canst thou live under it? If thou wert guilty of all the innocent blood that ever was shed since the creation of the world, it were not comparable to the guilt of this blood!

5. But if thou "come to Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than the blood of Abel," as a reconciled believing penitent; thou wilt also come and be adjoined to "the general assembly, to the church of the first-born written in heaven, to the innumerable company of angels, and to the spirits of just men made perfect."[1] Oh the joy in heaven that will be concerning thee! And oh the fulness of thy own joy, into which thou shalt enter at last! For consider,

6. And in the last place, what follows in the latter part of this verse; that is, that thou wilt be presented by thy Redeemer, "holy, and unblamable, and unreprovable in the sight of God," as if thou hadst never offended and never been an enemy. All thy former transgressions, that have overwhelmed thee with just sorrow, shall all be overwhelmed in that kind paternal joy, as for the returning prodigal: "This my son was lost, and is found."

And thy having been so long "alienated, and an enemy in thy mind by wicked works," will all be forgotten and swallowed up in the embraces of infinite, everlasting love!

[1] Heb. xii. 22—24.

A SERMON

DIRECTING WHAT WE ARE TO DO, AFTER A STRICT INQUIRY WHETHER OR NO WE TRULY LOVE GOD.

THE EPISTLE.

You may remember what a solemn awe was upon our congregation lately at the preaching of this ensuing sermon, and that not a few tears dropped at the hearing of it. This engaged some of us to entreat our reverend pastor, to give way, that by this publication it might be accommodated to your review. We know it is no more than one single thread, that belongs to many other discourses upon the same subject, which have preceded, and to others which we hope will follow; but such as by your notes and memories may easily be wrought into the whole piece. It is but a thread, yet a golden one, and may contribute to the service of the tabernacle.[1] We know it is a great condescension in him to suffer such an imperfect piece to come abroad; but when the Reverend Dean of C——, and other learned persons of the Church of England, have denied themselves by suffering such small prints for the general good, we are persuaded, though he gave not a positive judgment for it, he will not dislike that which is for your service, and is intended to go no farther. Receive it therefore, read it over and over, and allot some times for the putting in practice the grand examination urged upon us, and do your utmost to persuade all under your roofs and commands to do the like; that that which was preached with so much holy fervour and affection, may beget in us and ours a bright flame of Divine love to our good Lord, to whom we commend you, and are

Your affectionate brethren, and servants, etc.

[1] Exod. xxv.

A SERMON.

JOHN v. 42.

"BUT I KNOW YOU, THAT YE HAVE NOT THE LOVE OF GOD IN YOU."

You have heard several discourses from this Scripture, and from another in the same gospel, that we spoke to alternately with this at several times: "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee."[1] And that which, after doctrinal explication, hath hitherto been insisted on, was an inquiry into the state of our own case in reference hereunto; 'Are we lovers of God in Christ, or are we not?' There have been many things signified to you, by which this case might be discerned; and that which remains and most naturally follows hereupon, is to direct you what you are to do, supposing your case, upon inquiry, to be this or that. Why, such an inquiry, if it hath been attended to at all amongst us, it must have signified somewhat; it must, one would think, have some or other result; and what should we suppose it to result into but either this, 'I do not love God,' or 'I do?' These are most vastly different cases; it is a trial upon the most important point that could have been discussed among us; and supposing there should be two sorts among us, the effect of it is as if a parting line should be drawn through a congregation, severing the living from the dead; here are so many living, and so many dead souls. Indeed it is a very hard supposition, to suppose that there should be any one in all this assembly that doth not love God, a *very* hard sup-

[1] Chap. xxi. 17.

position; I am extremely loath to make such a supposition; I would as much as in me is, not suppose it. For truly it were a very sad case that we should agree so far as we do in many other things, and not agree in this; that is, that we should agree so many of us to come all and meet together here in one place, agree to worship God together, agree to sing his praises together, to seek his face together, to call upon his name together, to hear his word together, and not agree all to love God together: the God whom we worship, whom we invocate, whose name we bear, and unto whom we all of us pretend. For who is there among us will say, 'I have no part in God?' And it were a most lovely thing, a most comely, desirable thing that all such worshipping assemblies, even this worshipping assembly, at this time and all times, could still meet together under this one common notion, truly and justly assumed, as so many lovers of God. We are sure there will be an assembly, a general assembly, in which no one that is not a lover of God will be found; an assembly of glorious angels, and of the spirits of just men made perfect, a numerous, an innumerable assembly, in which not one but a sincere lover of God! What a blessed thing were it if our assemblies on earth were such! But we cannot speak more gently, than to say there is cause to fear they are not such: it hath been actually otherwise among a people professing the true religion. "They come unto thee, and they sit before thee as my people, and with their mouth show much love;" with their face, or in external appearance and show—*ore tenus*—they are lovers of God; and "they hear thy words, but they will not do them."[1] If such a case hath been actually, it is still possible, and is still too much to be feared to be but too common a case.

But now supposing that there be different cases among us, in reference to these different cases there must be very different departments, and a very different management of ourselves. This text more naturally leads me to direct what is to be done upon the supposition of the sadder case, most

[1] Ezek. xxxiii. 31.

deplorably sadder, that one is no lover of God; though we must be led on thereto by some things common to both cases.

I. Therefore that I may proceed by steps, this is requisite in the first place; that is, that we make one judgment of our case or another; that is, that we bring the matter some way to a judgment, not let so great a thing as this hang always in suspense. It is very plain—a little to press this—that,

1. While the case hangs thus in suspense, it suspends the proper subsequent duty too that should follow hereupon; what canst thou do that is certainly fit and proper for thy own soul, when thou dost not understand the state of its case? How canst thou guide thy course, or tell which way to apply or turn thyself? And,

2. To press it further, consider that the not bringing, or omitting to bring, this matter to a judgment, if it proceed from indifferency and neglect, speaks the greatest contempt that can be, both of God and thine own soul,—the greatest that can be; that is now, supposing the question be asked, 'Dost thou love God, or dost thou not?' and thou unconcernedly answerest, 'I cannot tell, I do not know,'—why, what! to be carelessly ignorant whether thou lovest God or lovest him not? There could not be a more concluding medium against thee, that thou dost *not* love him. It speaks thee at once to despise both God and thyself. What! to have this matter hang in indifferency through neglect, whether thou lovest God or lovest him not? It shows that neither regard to God nor a just value of thyself makes thee care whether thou art a holy man, or a devil. For know, that the loving God or not loving him does more distinguish a saint from a devil, than wearing a body or not wearing it can do. A devil, if he did love God, were a saint; a man that doth not love God, he is no other, though he wear a body, than an incarnate devil: it is the want of love to God that makes the devil a devil, makes him what he is.

II. For further direction, take heed of passing a false judgment in this case, a judgment contrary to the truth.

1. For that is to no purpose, it will avail thee nothing, you cannot be advantaged by it; for yours is not the supreme judgment. There will be another and superior judgment to yours, that will control and reverse your false judgment, and make it signify nothing; it is therefore to no purpose. And

2. It is a great piece of insolency; for it will be to oppose your judgment to his certain and most authorized judgment, who, if this be your case, hath already judged it, and tells you, 'I know you, that you have not the love of God in you.' It belongs to him by office to judge; the Father hath committed all judgment to the Son, as a little above in this chapter; and what! will you depose him? dethrone him? disannul his judgment? condemn him, that you may be righteous?[1]

3. It is most absurd, supposing such characters as you have heard do conclude a man in this case, yet to judge himself a lover of God. If against the evidence of such characters a man should pronounce the wrong judgment, it would be the most unreasonable and absurd thing imaginable; for then let us but suppose how that wrong judgment must lie related to those fore-mentioned characters, that have been given you.

Let me remind you of some of them.

He that never put forth the act of love to God, cannot say he hath the principle.

He that is not inclined to do good to others, for the sake of God.[2]

He that indulges himself in the inconsistent love of this world.[3]

He that lives not in obedience to his known laws.[4]

Now if you will pass a judgment of your case against the evidence of such characters, come forth then; let the matter be brought into clear sight; put your sense into plain words, and this it will be.

'I am a lover of God, or I have the love of God in me,

[1] To borrow that, Job xl. 8. [2] 1 John iii. 17. [3] 1 John ii. 15.
[4] John xiv. 15; 1 John v. 3, with many more.

though I cannot tell that ever I put forth one act of love towards him in all my life; I have the love of God in me, though I never knew what it meant to do good to any for his sake, against the express words of Scripture: "How dwelleth the love of God in such a man?" I have the love of God in me, though I have constantly indulged myself in that which he maketh an inconsistent love; "Love not the world, nor the things which are in the world; if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." I have the love of God in me, though I would never allow him to rule me, though I never kept his commandments with a design to please him and comply with his will. I have the love of God in me, though I never valued his love. I have the love of God in me, though I never cared for his image, for his presence, for his converse, for his interest and honour.' I beseech you consider how all this will sound! Can anything be more absurdly spoken? and shall it be upon such improbabilities or impossibilities as these, that any man will think it fit to venture his soul? 'I will pawn my soul upon it, I will run the hazard of my soul upon it, I am a lover of God for all this!' Would you venture anything else so besides your soul? Would you venture a finger so? an eye so? It is to place the name where there is nothing of the thing; it is to place the name of the thing upon its contrary. The soul of man cannot be in an indifferency towards God; but if there be not love and propension, there is aversion, and that is hatred. And what! is hatred to be called love? If you bear that habitual disposition of soul towards God, to go all the day long with no inclination towards him, no thought of him, no design to please him, to serve him, to glorify him; if this be your habitual temper and usual course, will you call this love? Shall this contrariety to the love of God be called love to him? You may as well call water fire, or fire water, as so grossly misname things here; and therefore again,—

III. That we may advance somewhat, plainly and positively pass the true judgment. If the characters that you have heard do carry the matter so, come at last plainly

and positively to pass the true judgment of your own case, though it be a sad one; and tell your own souls, 'O my soul, though I must sadly say it, I *must* say it, all things conclude and make against thee; "the love of God is not in thee."' Why! is it not as good this should be the present issue at your own bar, and at the tribunal of your own conscience, as before God's judgment seat? Why should you not concur and fall in with Christ, the authorized judge, whose judgment is according to truth? Why, this is a thing that must be done; the case requires it, and God's express word requires it.[1] Other previous and preparatory duty, plainly enjoined, doth by consequence enjoin it, and requires that it follow.[2] What is examination for, but in order to judgment? It must therefore be done; and I shall show how it must be done, and proceed to some farther directions.

1. You must do it solemnly. Take yourselves aside at some fit season or another, inspect your own souls, review your life, consider what your wonted frame and your ordinary course has been. And if you find by such characters as heretofore were given, this is the truth of your case, then let judgment pass upon deliberation. 'O my soul! thou hast not the love of God in thee, whatsoever thine appearances hitherto have been: and whatsoever thy peace and quiet hath been, thou hast not the love of God in thee.' Let it be done with solemnity.

2. Do it in the sight of God, as before him; as under his eye, as under the eye of Christ, that eye that is as a flame of fire, that searches hearts and tries reins; arraign thyself before him. 'Lord! I have here brought before thee a guilty soul, a delinquent soul, a wretched and horrid delinquent, a soul that was breathed into me by thee, an intelligent, understanding soul, a soul that hath love in its nature, but a soul that never loved thee.'

3. Judge thyself before him as to the fact and as to the fault. As to the fact: 'I have never yet loved thee, O God, I own it to thee; Lord, I accuse, I charge my soul with

[1] 1 Cor. xi. 31. [2] 2 Cor. xiii. 5.

this before thee; this is the truth of the fact, I have not the love of God in me.' And charge thyself with the fault: 'Oh horrid creature that I am! I was made by thee, and do not love thee; thou didst breathe into me this reasonable immortal spirit, and it doth not love thee; it is thy own offspring, and does not love thee. It can never be blessed in anything but thee, and it does not love thee.' And then hereupon,

4. Join to this self-judging, self-loathing. That we are to judge ourselves, is a law laid upon us by the supreme Lawgiver, the one Lawgiver that hath power to save and to destroy. And his word that enjoins it as plainly tells us what must go with it, that this self-judging must be accompanied with self-loathing.[1] Do God that right upon thyself, that thou mayest tell him, 'Blessed God! I do even hate myself, because I find I have not loved thee; and I cannot but hate myself, and I never will be reconciled to myself, till I find I am reconciled to thee.' This is doing justice. Doth not the Scripture usually and familiarly so represent to us the great turn of the soul to God, when poor sinners become penitents and return, that they are brought to hate themselves and loathe themselves in their own eyes? And is there anything that can make a soul so loathsome in itself, or ought to make it so loathsome to itself, as not to love God,—to be destitute of the love of God? And then,

5. Hereupon, too, pity thyself; pity thy own soul. There is cause to hate it, to loathe it, and is there no cause to pity it? to lament it? Doth not this look like a lamentable case? 'Oh! what a soul have I that can love anything else, that can love trifles, that can love impurities, that can love sin; and cannot love God, Christ, the most desirable good of souls? What a soul have I? What a monster in the creation of God is this soul of mine!' Methinks you should set yourselves, if any of you can find this to be the case, to weep over your own souls. Some may see cause to say, 'O my soul, thou hast in thee other valuable things; thou hast

[1] Ezek. vi. 9; chap. xx. 43, and xxxvi. 31.

understanding in thee, judgment in thee, wit in thee; perhaps learning, considerable acquired endowments in thee; but thou hast not the love of God in thee. I can do many other commendable or useful things; I can discourse plausibly, argue subtilely, I can manage affairs dexterously, but I cannot love God. O my soul, how great an essential dost thou want to all religion, to all duty, to all felicity! The one thing necessary thou wantest; thou hast every thing but what thou needest more than anything, more than all things; and O my soul, what is like at this rate to become of thee? Where art thou to have thy eternal abode? To what regions of horror, and darkness, and woe art thou going? What society can be fit for thee,—no lover of God? No lover of God! What, but of infernal accursed spirits that are at utmost distance from him, and to whom no beam of holy vital light shall ever shine to all eternity! Thou, O my soul, art self-abandoned to the blackness of darkness for ever. Thy doom is in thy breast, thy own bosom; thy no love to God is thy own doom, thy eternal doom; creates thee a present hell, and shows whither thou belongest.'

6. Let a due fear and solicitude hereupon be set on work in thee. For consider thyself as one shortly to be arraigned before the supreme tribunal; and then here is the critical, vertical point upon which thy judgment turns,—lovers of God or no lovers of God. All are to be judged in reference to what they were and did in the body, whether good or evil.[1] What wast thou as to this point while thou wast in the body? for the last judgment regards that former state; what thou didst, and what was thy wont as to this, whilst thou wast in the body. Therefore, by the way, no hope, after thou art gone out of the body; go out of the body no lover of God, the departing soul no lover of God, and this will be found your state at the judgment day! You are not to expect, after death, a gospel to be preached that you may then be reconciled to God. No, but what did you do in the body? According to that you are to be judged. Did you

[1] 2 Cor. v. 10.

love God in this body while here, yea or no? And this is a trial upon the most fundamental point; for as all the law is comprehended in love, as was formerly hinted, if you be found guilty in this point, that you were no lover of God, totally destitute of the love of God, you were a perpetual underminer of his whole government, of the whole frame of his law; a disloyal creature, rebellious and false to the God that made you, to Jesus Christ that redeemed you by his blood. All disobedience and rebellion is summed up in this one word,—having been no lover of God; and will it not make any man's heart to meditate terror, to think of having such a charge as this likely to lie against him in the judgment of that day; that day, when the secrets of all hearts are to be laid open? "Every work must be then brought into judgment, and every secret thing, whether it be good or evil."[1] And it will be to the confusion of many a one. It may be your no-love of God was heretofore a great secret; you had a heart in which was no love of God, but it was a secret; you took not care to have it writ in your forehead; you conversed with men so plausibly, nobody took you to be no lover of God,—to have a heart disaffected to God. But now out comes the secret; that which you kept for a great secret all your days, out comes the secret; and to have such a secret as this disclosed to that vast assembly before angels, and men! Here was a creature, a reasonable creature, an intelligent soul, that lived upon the Divine bounty and goodness so many years in the world below, and hid a false disloyal heart by a plausible show and external profession of great devotedness to God all the time of his abode in that world. Oh! what a fearful thing would it be to have this secret so disclosed? And do you think that all the loyal creatures, that shall be spectators and auditors in the hearing of that great day, will not all conceive a just and a loyal indignation against such a one, when convicted of not loving God; convicted of not loving Him that gave him breath, Him whose he was, to whom he belonged, whose name he bore? What a fearful thing will

[1] Eccles. xii. 14.

it be to stand convicted so upon such a point as this! And sure, in the meantime, there is great reason for continual fear; why a man's heart should meditate terror! One would even think that all the creation should be continually every moment in arms against him! One would be afraid that every wind that blows, should be a deadly blast to destroy me! that when the sun shines upon me, all its beams should be turned into vindictive flames, to execute vengeance upon me! I would fear that even the very stones in the streets should fly against me, and everything that meets me be my death! For what? I have not the love of God in me! What! to go about the streets from day to day with a heart void of the love of God! What a heart have I! Fear ought to be exercised in this case. We are bid to fear if we do evil against a human ruler: "If thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain."[1] But if I be such an evil doer against the Supreme Ruler, the Lord of heaven and earth; have I not reason to be afraid? and to think sadly with myself what will the end of this be? But yet I will add,

7. Do not despair for all this. God is in Christ reconciling the world to himself,[2] that sin might not be imputed. He is in Christ to reconcile you; to win hearts, to captivate souls to the love of God; for what else is reconciliation on our part? He is in Christ to reconcile; to conquer enmity, to subdue disaffected hearts, to make such souls call and cry, 'My Lord, and my God! I have been a stranger to thee, I will through thy grace be so no longer.' Therefore do not despair. Despair that ever you should do well without loving God, but do not despair you shall ever be brought to love him. By no means. You have to do with him that is the element of love, the God of love, the fountain of love, the great source of love, the fountain at once both of loveliness and love; whose nature is love, and is, with his name, in his Son, who was manifested in the flesh full of grace and truth; that is, sincerest love. He was incarnate love, love

[1] Romans xiii. 4. [2] 2 Cor. v. 19.

pointed at us, and is upon these terms able to transform all the world into love. The nature of God is all love,[1] and in Christ, he is Immanuel, God with us; so the Divine love hath a direct aspect upon us. Why then, apply yourselves to him, turn yourselves towards him, open your souls to him; say to him, 'Lord, flow in with all the mighty powers of thine own love upon my soul: thou that canst of stones raise up children, and make them the true genuine sons of Abraham'—and there can be no such children, without love—'O dissolve this stone, this stone is my breast; mollify this obdurate heart, turn it into love!' How soon may it be done upon due application; he can quickly do it, draw thee into a love-union with himself, so as that thou shouldst come to dwell in love, and dwell in God, who is love, and he in thee. Then the foundations are surely laid for all thy future duty and for all thy future felicity. Then how pleasantly wilt thou obey and how blessedly wilt thou enjoy God for ever! But such application must be made through Christ, and for the Spirit; which Spirit is the Spirit of love, and of power, and of a sound mind.[2] But these things I cannot now further insist upon.

[1] 1 John iv. 16.

[2] As you have in that, 2 Tim. i. 7.

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